

CAMPAIGNS AND THEIR LESSONS

The following Volumes are in the Press :

WAR IN BOHEMIA IN 1866

By MAJOR NEIL MALCOLM

CAMPAIGN OF 1871 AFTER SEDAN

By HON. G. H. MARRIS

OTHERS IN PREPARATION

CAMPAIGNS AND THEIR LESSONS

EDITED BY COLONEL C. E. CALLWELL, C.B.

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BY
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INTRODUCTION

THE Tirah Campaign of 1897 has been chosen to serve as an example of operations undertaken by a disciplined army against irregular antagonists. It illustrates most vividly the peculiar difficulties to which regular troops are exposed when they are conducting operations against a guerilla enemy in mountainous territory. It moreover took place comparatively recently, and the troops were in consequence armed with weapons of quite modern pattern. The value of the lessons to be derived from certain of its episodes, furthermore, is enhanced by the fact that a proportion of the tribesmen who were arrayed against the Anglo-Indian soldiery, had arms of precision in their hands. Now that the great nations have absorbed so many of the remoter portions of the earth into their dominions, the era of campaigns undertaken by disciplined armies against semi-civilised or barbarous races fighting under the standard of autocratic potentates, is coming to an end. But the days of guerilla warfare are by no means numbered, and expeditions which may have much in common with that of 1897 into Tirah, are likely enough to be forced upon the Indian Government from time to time for many years to come on the North-West Frontier.

The gravest of the difficulties with which regular troops

are apt to be confronted when opposed to masters of the art of partisan warfare, spring from the disinclination to commit themselves to decisive action to which such antagonists are prone, and from their capacity for dispersing when it suits them without suffering in morale nor yet in fighting efficiency under the process. These characteristics, guerillas are wont to display in all parts of the world. The legions of the First Empire experienced it when coping with the *somatenes* in the Peninsula. The Russian troops experienced it during their Caucasian campaigns in the days of Schamyl. French battalions and squadrons experienced it when they were for so many years endeavouring to overcome the resistance of the Berber tribes in Algeria. Our own armies experienced it during the later stages of the protracted operations in South Africa. In certain theatres of war the task imposed upon generals, upon subordinate commanders and upon the rank and file, may be rendered additionally arduous and exacting by special circumstances—the ground may be much broken and intersected, great distances may have to be covered, the adversary may have exceptional mobility at his command. But the principle remains substantially the same. The enemy fights when he chooses and runs away when he chooses without being the worse for doing so, and this proved to be the case in 1897.

The secluded uplands known as Tirah, with the avenues that lead up to the district through the border hills, together constituted a theatre of war which was unusually rugged and difficult of access. The communications

traversing the region were of the most primitive description. It was a land of narrow gorges and steep declivities, of jagged hill-tops and hidden nullahs. On the other hand, the scene of actual operations, taken as a whole, was not so unproductive as is often found to be the case when regulars are engaged in hostilities against uncivilised warriors, and the consequence was that, although the transport of the army caused peculiar difficulties owing to the character of the tracks which it was obliged to follow, the strain upon it was much relaxed owing to the finding of large supplies of forage and of other foodstuffs within the zone of conflict. This is an important point, and one which ought not to be overlooked when applying the experiences of this particular campaign to mountain warfare against savage opponents in general. The conditions were, moreover, in one respect quite abnormal. The very fact of troops making their way into Tirah constituted an effective achievement in itself towards bringing about the submission of the tribesmen—the absence of a definite objective is one of the main obstacles that a disciplined force as a rule has to contend with when dealing with mercurial exponents of partisan strategy and tactics.

The experiences undergone by Sir W. Lockhart's Field Force in its contest with the Afridis and the Orakzais are especially instructive, owing to the extent to which the problem of the wounded, a problem which is often exceptionally troublesome in small wars, was almost daily exemplified during the operations. Their tendency to show their greatest zest and activity when following up

an adversary in retreat is apt to make this problem abnormally difficult of solution when confronted with guerillas. Even comparatively speaking civilised insurgents in arms against a government, are inclined to mis-handle soldiers who are so unfortunate as to fall into their hands ; but when the troops are pitted against ferocious savages, the disposal of the injured becomes a source of the utmost anxiety. This question assumed extraordinary importance in Tirah, and it served as a contributory cause towards bringing about certain minor reverses of which the troops were the victims.

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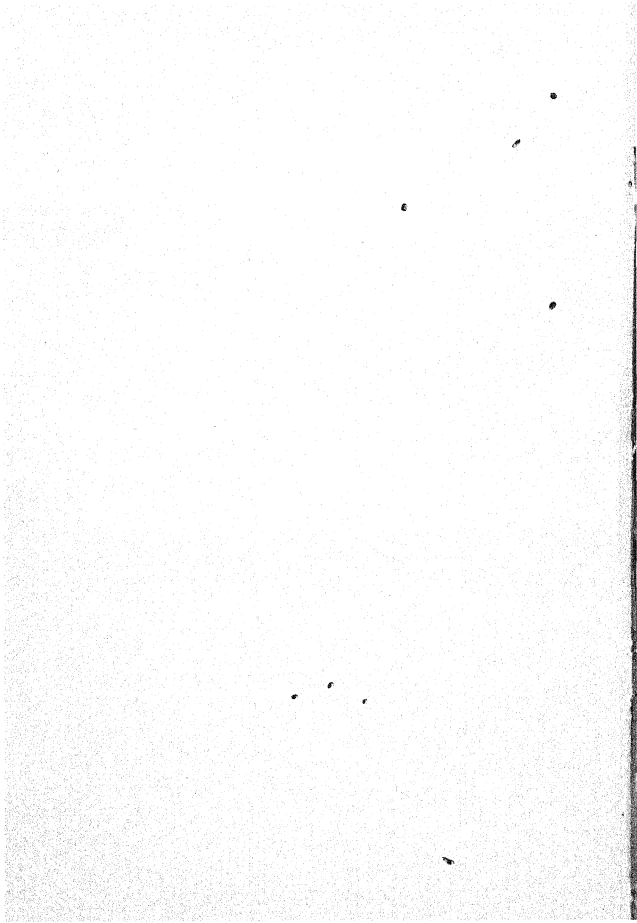
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CAMPAIGNS AND THEIR LESSONS

TIRAH, 1897

CHAPTER I

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE CAMPAIGN

The geography of Tirah.—The elevated tract situated in the mountains to the south-west of the plain known as the Peshawar Valley, which is called Tirah, is the summer home of two great Pathan tribes, the Afridis and the Orakzais. As will be seen from the map at the end of the volume, this district includes the upper basins of the Bara and of its tributary the Mastura, streams which unite within the hill country and, under the name of the Bara River, emerge on to the plain of Peshawar about fifteen miles to the south-west of that city. To the south of Tirah lies the well-marked depression which is known as the Khanki Valley. The Khanki flows from west to east and reaches the Panjab plain not far to the west of Kohat; its head waters are held to be included in Tirah, as are also those of a stream immediately to the west, which runs south-westwards into the Kūram River through a gorge known as the Karmana defile. It is a region which in reality has no well-defined frontier; but it may be said to cover an area which is roughly oval in form, the longer axis, about forty-five miles long, running west and east, the shorter axis, about twenty miles long, running north and south.

The Afridis.—The Afridis, who occupy all the northern portions of Tirah, are one of the largest, most turbulent and most warlike of the tribes on the North-West Frontier of India. They are, moreover, one of the most wealthy. They number, all told, nearly 30,000 fighting men, and at the time of the expedition of 1897 about half of these appear to have been armed with weapons of range and precision. From Tirah, the Afridi country extends north-eastwards, so as to include the Bazar Valley, which opens on to the plain, south of the Khyber Pass; beyond that, again, their territory includes the Khyber Pass itself. To the north and north-west of the Afridi valleys, beyond the great Sufed Koh Range, is found the land of the Shinwaris, a tribe held to be definitely under the rule of the Amir of Afghanistan.

That portion of Tirah which is in Afridi hands only represents about one-third of their country; for this, besides stretching north-eastwards to beyond the Khyber Pass, extends eastwards so as to include the hills immediately to the south-west and south of the Peshawar Valley, and it covers a portion of the enclave of uplands which juts out from the border mountains towards the Indus between Peshawar and Kohat. This enclave is not considered to be within the Indian frontier, and the track across its neck, which traverses what is called the Kohat Pass, is under charge of one of the Afridi clans, the Adam Khels, who have been for many years subsidised by Government and who remained neutral during the troubles of 1897. For some years previously to the risings on the North-West Frontier which occurred in the summer of that year, the Khyber Pass had been policed and garrisoned by an Afridi irregular corps known as the Khyber Rifles, the Afridis being subsidised and holding themselves responsible for the maintenance of good order

in the defile. Thus the two important routes which lead respectively westwards and southwards into the hills from the Peshawar Valley were both under control of this formidable tribe. Some details with regard to the subdivisions into which it is broken up are given in Appendix I.

The Orakzais.—The southern portions of Tirah are within the region occupied by the Orakzais, a somewhat less numerous tribe than the Afridis, but nevertheless mustering about 25,000 fighting men. The Orakzais lay claim to practically the whole of the Khanki Valley down to where it reaches the level country, their territory extending eastwards to within a few miles of Kohat. To the south-west, beyond the Samana Range which forms the southern watershed of the Khanki Valley, they march with the hilly tract occupied by the large Zaimukht tribe—old antagonists of British and Indian troops, who, however, remained quiescent in 1897. The Orakzais had proved themselves in the past less truculent and unmanageable than the Afridis; but, as will be seen in this and succeeding chapters, they fought with great determination during the conflicts which preceded the organisation of the Tirah expedition, and they at first offered a most strenuous resistance to the advance of the army under Sir W. Lockhart. As a consequence of an expedition undertaken against them in 1891, fortified posts had been established within their borders, towards the eastern extremity of the Samana Range. These defences were garrisoned in 1897 by the 36th Sikhs, and it may be mentioned that the presence of these posts and garrisons within their territory was one of the excuses put forward by the Orakzais for taking up arms. The subdivisions of the tribe are given in Appendix I.

The Chamkanis.—It should be noted that at the extreme western end of Tirah, north of the Karmana defile, is the

territory of the Chamkanis, a clan apart from either the Afridis or the Orakzais. As they took part in the hostilities against the Indian Government in 1897, they were dealt with during the course of the Tirah campaign.

The winter climate.—Owing to its great elevation, the climate of Tirah is very severe in the winter time, when the whole region is generally covered with snow for some weeks. It is the practice of the Afridis to descend into the lower Bazar Valley and on to the foothills on the borders of the Peshawar Valley in the late autumn, taking with them their herds and livestock. The Orakzais similarly seek the lower portions of the Khanki Valley, and frequent the plains south of the Samana Range to avoid the winter cold.

Ignorance of the theatre of war at the time of the expedition.—When the expedition was being organised in 1897, the topographical features of Tirah proper, and the resources which the region offered to an invading army, were practically known only by hearsay; no force had ever penetrated into these remote valleys. They had been visited by no European, the fame of their beauty and their riches was known all over Northern India, but the fertility and the admirable water supply of which the tribesmen often boasted were only partially realised even by the Intelligence Department at Simla.¹ As will be seen in succeeding chapters, the want of reliable information as to routes and as to available supplies was one of the chief difficulties which the army encountered during the campaign.

The outbreaks on the North-West Frontier.—Into the causes which led to the outbreaks on the part of the Afridis and Orakzais in 1897, and which brought about the advance of an Anglo-Indian army into Tirah in the autumn of that

¹ An officer had visited the lower stretches of the Bara Valley in 1892.

year, it is not proposed to enter. But it must be understood that the exhibitions of hostility on the part of these two great tribes which compelled the Indian Government to undertake an expedition on a large scale into the heart of their country, only formed incidents in a succession of acts of tribal aggression taking place at a number of points along a wide extent of the border hills during that summer.

The disturbances began in the Tochi Valley, which lies some distance to the south of the Kuram River ; a sudden outrage in that quarter necessitated the despatch of a strong punitive expedition into the valley in the month of July. Towards the end of that month an equally unexpected outbreak occurred in an entirely different quarter, attacks being made without the slightest warning upon the garrisons of Malakand and Chakdara, on the borders of the Swat country, north of the Peshawar Valley ; a large body of troops had to be collected to deal with this difficulty. This rising was almost immediately followed by a sudden incursion into the Peshawar Valley at its north-western extremity on the part of the Mohmunds, a tribe who occupy the hills beyond the Kabul River, and by an attack delivered by fighting-men of this clan upon the neighbouring fort of Shabkadr. This incident occurred on the 8th of August, and about the same time rumours became rife in the Peshawar bazaars that the Afridis and Orakzais were meditating mischief. In consequence of this news the formation of two reserve brigades was ordered at Rawal Pindi, to be under command respectively of Major-General Yeatman-Biggs and of Brigadier-General Westmacott, and it speedily transpired that their services would be required at once.

Capture of the Khyber by the Afridis.—On the 23rd of August the Afridis, coming down from the hills in great

strength, fell upon the isolated posts and forts in the Khyber Pass. Their fellow-tribesmen in the pay of the Indian Government offered upon the whole a half-hearted resistance, and before nightfall the entire defile was in the hands of the enemy. The capture of the important post of Landi Kotal was an achievement of great importance to the tribesmen, for they secured some 50,000 rounds of small-arm ammunition within its walls. The Afridis had arranged with the Orakzais that these latter were to attack the forts on the Samana Range at the same time as they themselves carried out this descent on the Khyber, but the arrangement fell through for the moment owing to the unwillingness of the Orakzais to commit themselves definitely until they were certain that the Afridis would actually carry out their share of the transaction. However, on the news of the successful termination to the Afridi enterprise reaching them, they delivered a number of attacks on minor posts, which extended from near Kohat right round to the Kuram Valley, during the last days of August. These efforts were in almost all cases unsuccessful, and they had the result of inducing General Yeatman-Biggs who was now in command at Kohat to organise small mobile columns for the purpose of rapid action in any required direction; they, moreover, accelerated the movement of reinforcements to Kohat. But on the 12th of September a great force of Orakzais, supported by some Afridi tribesmen, made its appearance in the vicinity of the forts on the Samana, and flung down the gauntlet in unmistakable fashion.

The Attack on the Samana posts.—There were, as shown in the sketch plan facing page 56, three of these works—Fort Gulistan was farthest to the west, then came the post of Seragheri, which had only a garrison of twenty-one of the 36th Sikhs, while Fort Lockhart, the

largest, was situated at the eastern end. The enemy, to start with, concentrated their efforts upon Seragheri, which was captured after a most gallant resistance, its defenders all dying at their posts; an attempt made from Fort Lockhart to relieve the post had to be abandoned. After this initial success the enemy closely invested Fort Gulistan, and a large body of tribesmen succeeded in establishing themselves close to the walls of the stronghold; but these were expelled from their coign of vantage by a brilliantly executed sortie. Water was, however, scarce, numbers of the garrison were wounded, and the place was already seriously beset and in some danger when, on the 14th, a relieving force under General Yeatman-Biggs arrived upon the scene. Thereupon the Afridis who had been assisting in the attack repaired home to their summer quarters in Tirah, the Orakzais drew off into the Khanki Valley, and active hostilities came to an end for the moment.

A campaign decided upon.—No steps had as yet been taken to recover possession of the Khyber Pass since its seizure on the 23rd of August, but the hostile attitude assumed by the Afridis and Orakzais had made it imperative that these two great clans should be punished for their aggression, and the Indian Government had already decided upon operations on a large scale. Preliminary measures had already been taken to muster the necessary forces to carry out what was foreseen to be a serious enterprise, the more so inasmuch as campaigns were already in progress at this time at several other points on the North-West Frontier. A large force was engaged in the Swat country in consequence of the tribal attacks on Malakand and Chakdara. Active hostilities were proceeding against the Mohmunds and neighbouring tribes. The punitive expedition into the Tochi Valley had completed most of

its task, but the force detailed for the undertaking was still in the field.

Effect of other campaigns that were in progress at the time.—Although these various sets of operations remained quite distinct from the Tirah campaign, they exerted an important influence over it in one respect. The supply available in the Punjab of pack animals of the type suitable for military transport in the hills is by no means inexhaustible; the fact, therefore, of so many expeditions being at work simultaneously threw a tremendous strain upon the resources in mules and ponies at the disposal of the responsible military department. It was, indeed, largely due to the risings of tribes which were acting quite independently of the clans occupying Tirah that the transport supplied for the expedition into that region proved so unsatisfactory, and that the movements of the Field Force were, in consequence, so much hampered. It was the case, moreover, that some of the troops chosen to take part in the Tirah expedition were engaged in these other operations, and that their arrival was consequently somewhat delayed; but this did not appreciably affect the date when the advance ultimately commenced.

The Simla Memorandum.—The command of the forces detailed for the campaign to be undertaken against the Afridis and Orakzais was entrusted to Lieutenant-General Sir W. Lockhart, a soldier of great distinction who possessed an almost unrivalled experience of hill warfare. A memorandum was issued from Army Head-quarters at Simla towards the end of September in which the composition of the force was announced, and in which a number of other details were communicated. The document began with the following pronouncement in reference to the purpose of the contemplated operations, and to the methods that

were to be adopted to compel the submission of the recalcitrant tribes :—

“The general object of this expedition is to exact reparation for the unprovoked aggression of the Afridi and Orakzais tribes on the Peshawar and Kohat borders, for the attacks on our frontier posts, and for the damage to life and property which has thus been inflicted on British subjects and on those in the British service. It is believed that this object can best be attained by the invasion of Tirah, the summer home of the Afridis and Orakzais, which has never before been entered by a British force.”

It should be added that it was the just boast of the two tribes that no hostile army had ever penetrated into Tirah. No army had done so in modern times, and it is believed that the conquering hosts which swept down from time to time upon the Indus through the Khyber in the Middle Ages, never turned aside to force their way into the sanctuary of the cut-throats who had for centuries claimed to hold the renowned defile in their keeping. Since the annexation of the Panjab, punitive expeditions had been undertaken at different times both against the Orakzais and against the Afridis ; but Anglo-Indian troops had never made their presence felt except on the outer fringes of the mountainous territory which these tribesmen regarded as their own.

CHAPTER II

THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

Absence of a well-defined objective not unusual in small wars.—In conflicts of this nature, struggles where the military forces of a civilised nation are pitted against gatherings of savage warriors fighting in defence of their own country, it is not unusually the case that one of the chief difficulties, if not indeed the chief difficulty, with which the regular troops have to contend arises out of the absence of any well-defined objective to govern the general plan of operations. The troops have no distinct goal to aim at. To track the enemy is an arduous task, to bring him to bay is impossible. Food for man and beast composing the invading host is as a rule but scantily provided in theatres of war such as form the scene of these campaigns. Routes are almost impassable for the heavy columns of transport which must follow in the train of disciplined soldiery. Information as to the topographical features of the region in which fighting is to take place is almost always defective and is often wholly wanting. The troops are contending with nimble, crafty adversaries, who are thoroughly acquainted with the ground, who come and go at will, who refuse to accept battle except when the conditions happen to be altogether in their own favour, and whose bent is rather for spasmodic, unexpected enterprises than for well-regulated offensive or defensive operations. The problem presented by the task of chastising the confederated

Afridis and Orakzais presented, however, one feature so unusual as to create an almost unique situation.

Tirah a definite goal.—These marauding hillmen paid allegiance to no settled government, and they acknowledged no paramount chief. Not a single township worthy of the name existed within the limits of their territory, still less anything in the nature of a metropolis towards which an invading army could direct its footsteps. But their summer home had never yet been entered by a hostile host. The tribesmen had persuaded themselves that an expeditionary force would find it impossible to penetrate into their inmost fastnesses, and they asserted openly and defiantly that those fastnesses were unconquerable. To strike a decisive blow at the fierce highlanders who had wrested the Khyber from the levies in the pay of the Indian Government, and who had slaughtered the Sikh defenders of Seragheri, it had become imperative to thrust Anglo-Indian troops into the region which they declared to be inviolate and inviolable, so as to prove to them that nature's bulwarks in which they put their trust offered no impassable barrier to a British fighting force when this was flouted. Whether the enemy offered a strenuous resistance by the way or whether the advance was unopposed, the heart of Tirah provided a definite and admirable objective for the invading army.

Sir W. Lockhart's proclamation.—The Indian Government had decided that this was no occasion for half-measures. The acts of aggression committed by the Afridis in the Khyber had been too presumptuous, the lawless violence of the Orakzais on the Kohat border had been too insulting and their attacks on the Samana posts too outrageous, to be met by a retaliation confined to punitive expeditions of the normal kind into the outer valleys peopled by the recalcitrant clans. These freebooters of the mountains had boasted that the "purdah" concealing

Tirah could not be lifted. They were to be taught, once and for all, that they were grievously mistaken. An advance into this region of which so much had been heard was not only demanded by the circumstances of the case as an operation of highly effective warfare, but it was also desirable in the interests of restoring the prestige of British power which had appreciably suffered not only in the Panjab but also in Afghanistan, in consequence of the loss of the Khyber, of the fall of the Seragheri post, and of the somewhat protracted character of the warlike operations in the Swat and Mohmund countries. Such being the irrevocable decision of the Government, Sir W. Lockhart before commencing his advance issued a proclamation to the Afridis and Orakzais. In this, after recounting the events which had compelled the Indian authorities to take up arms and to invade their country, he announced to all of them whom it might concern that, whether his progress was opposed or was not opposed, he intended to march through their country and to announce the terms imposed by the Government from his head-quarters in Tirah itself. Thus the conditions brought it about that the military authorities at Simla and the commander-designate of the expedition, in framing the plan of campaign, had an unmistakable objective to attain at the outset of the campaign—the penetration of an army into Tirah.

One column or several columns?—This point having been determined, the next question which called for a decision was whether the troops detailed for the expedition ought to be organised as one single column or whether the force was to be broken up into a number of columns. This in itself presented a highly interesting problem calling for solution.

Advantages of a number of columns.—In a normal hill campaign there are certain undoubted advantages to be

gained by dividing up the troops which have been mobilised into several columns. A theatre of war of this kind will generally consist of a number of valleys, in each of which are to be found a proportion of the hamlets and cultivated lands which usually constitute the wealth of the tribe. Supposing, as is so often the case, that the configuration of the frontier lends itself to the plan, then it may be possible to detail a column of suitable strength to each principal valley which opens on to the level country in occupation of the troops. Such punitive measures as may be in contemplation can thus be carried out simultaneously in a number of localities, and by this means the progress of the campaign as a whole is likely to be much accelerated. It is not unusual, moreover, for each valley to constitute the territorial district of a different subdivision of the main tribe. Each subdivision will, naturally enough, assemble in defence of its own settlements as soon as these are threatened, and the consequence is that such combination as may have been originally contemplated between the different subdivisions comes to an end at the very outset of hostilities. Moreover, when there are several columns in the field, there is usually a reasonable prospect of dealing rapidly and effectually with the local defenders in at least one quarter, and the spectacle of the preparations being made for carrying out equally damaging operations in adjacent valleys is likely to damp the warlike ardour amongst the inhabitants of these. Thus sharp punishment inflicted on a single valley may bring about the early submission of the whole tribe. Furthermore, it will often be the case that the organisation of a number of columns advancing from different points will facilitate the preliminary assembling of the troops, and will simplify the massing of the transport and of the stores necessary to enable these to take the field at the start.

How the above applied in the particular case.—Applying the above-named principles to the case of the campaign under consideration, we find that, in as far as the configuration of the frontier was concerned, this favoured the employment of several columns. The map at the end of the volume and that facing page 132 make it apparent that not only the configuration of the frontier, but also the direction followed by the valleys within the contemplated theatre of war, plainly suggested the desirability of advancing simultaneously from a number of different points. One column, for instance, could work its way from the Peshawar Valley up the Bara Valley, another could advance into the Bazar Valley, and a third could be employed in recovering possession of the Khyber, all three of them operating in Afridi country. Three other columns could be acting simultaneously against the Orakzais, one moving from near Kohat up the Kariach Valley, a second pushing forward from about the Samana posts into the Khanki Valley, while a third, operating from the Kuram Valley, could penetrate into the Chamkani country and enter the territory of the westernmost Orakzai clans. All six columns, except for the one operating in the Khyber, would, as they advanced, tend to converge upon the centre of Tirah.

Disadvantages of a number of columns.—But strong arguments can also in most cases of this kind be adduced against the principle of utilising a number of columns. From the days when Dundee was hard put to it to allay the jealousies animating the Macdonalds and Camerons and Macleans gathered together under his standard, down to the operations which provide the most recent example of typical hill warfare—the contest between the Spanish forces and the Berbers of the Riff in the autumn of 1909—the records of struggles of this class go far to prove that

mountaineers rarely include a genius for combination amongst their martial virtues.

Possibility of united action by tribesmen against a single one of several columns.—Still, it is not always permissible to place absolute reliance upon this characteristic incapacity for co-operation amongst mountain clans, even when these clans are normally in a position of rivalry. Common enmities and common interests will sometimes unite them for a season—especially in the early days of a conflict, before opportunities have presented themselves for quarrelling over the distribution of spoils or excuse has been afforded for indulging in recriminations after a reverse of fortune. It was known that swarms of Afridi tribesmen had sustained the Orakzais in their venture against the Samana defences. Moreover, seeing that so many of the clans and subdivisions into which the two great tribes are divided, habitually assemble in Tirah in the summer time with their herds and flocks, it was almost inevitable that when the definite advance of the invading army began, formidable assemblages of fighting men would be gathered together in a central position, who might conceivably swoop down in great force upon one of several columns were the plan of an advance on several lines to be decided upon. The special conditions of the case which the military authorities were obliged to consider in all its bearings in 1897, suggested to some extent that the enemy might adopt the principle of operating on interior lines if a number of columns were to enter the theatre of war at different points.

A number of columns costly in line of communications troops, and technical troops.—But there are also other disadvantages in operating in several columns, and these must not be overlooked in a review of the problem which presented itself to the military authorities on this occasion.

In the first place, this method is apt to be wasteful in troops and to be extravagant in skilled military labour. In warfare of this nature, any body of troops advancing more than a very few miles into the enemy's territory must almost necessarily maintain a secure line of communications leading back to its base. Such security can only be arrived at by detailing troops to guard the line. These troops are confined practically to performing purely sedentary duties, and they can rarely take part in active offensive operations against the enemy. Now, it is obvious that the total lengths when added together of the lines of communications of several columns which have advanced a given distance into the hostile country, will exceed the length of the line of communications of a single column which has advanced the same distance. The strength, moreover, of the force needed to guard a line of communications does not depend on the size of the column which that line of communications is linking with its base—in other words, a large column does not necessarily require more line-of-communication troops than a small one does. It follows, therefore, that, under any ordinary circumstances, the plan of dividing up the army into a number of separate columns means that far more troops will be employed on this sedentary work in rear, than if the expedition be organised as a single column. Nor is that all.

It is usually the case in irregular warfare, and almost invariably the case when this has a mountainous region for its theatre, that only the rudest of communications traverse the country included in the operations. Although detailed information as to the greater part of the Afridi and Orakzai country was wanting, it was well known that the scene of the impending struggle was exceptionally broken and intersected even for the rugged North-West Frontier borderland, and it had been ascertained that such

tracks as existed were of the most elementary description. Amongst the ravines and declivities of this tangled mountain region, the routes which satisfy the inhabitants are mere narrow paths, which a laden pack-animal can only use with extreme difficulty at many points, along which two beasts cannot move abreast, and on many stretches of which it is impossible for a return convoy to pass transport moving towards the front. The consequence is that an immense amount of labour has to be performed by troops of the sapper-and-miner and the pioneer classes, before these primitive communications are transformed into routes by which a military force can replenish its food and its warlike stores. The greater the length of the line of communications, or of the aggregate of lines of communications, the more work has to be performed and the larger must be the force of technically trained troops detailed to assist the army.

A number of columns wasteful in transport.—But the system of employing several columns is also apt to be wasteful in transport. To realise why this is the case, it is necessary to understand that during operations in a region where the supplies of food and fodder have to be carried with the force, it is a fundamental principle of strategy, as governed by administrative considerations, that the bulk of the fighting force should be kept as far back as requirements of safety permit, until all is prepared for the troops to act with vigour. From the Quartermaster-General's point of view, supplies ought to be pushed to the front under protection of only a portion of the troops, these troops acting simply as escort to the supply convoys; the main body in the meantime should remain at the base, where its feeding arrangements presumably present little difficulty. On this principle an advanced magazine of food and fodder can be established at some distance

within the enemy's borders before the main advance begins.

The supply problem.—It will, of course, sometimes be necessary for the whole force to advance at the outset, so as to win a way forward to the locality where the magazine is to be established. But when it has done its work, supply difficulties will be relieved if a large part of it marches back again; otherwise the supplies are likely to be eaten up as fast as they can arrive along the very indifferent routes that usually have to be depended upon. It may be possible to repeat this process, the army constantly pushing its food in front of it, as it were, instead of dragging this after it—the plan was adopted by Lord Wolseley both before Tel el Kebir and during his expedition for the relief of General Gordon, in each case with excellent results. The smaller the force necessary to provide adequate protection for the advanced magazine, the more rapidly will the supplies accumulate; because a smaller proportion of them will be consumed daily on the spot. But if there are several columns advancing from different points into the theatre of war, each of them will have to form its own advanced magazine if this principle is observed, and each magazine will want protection. When the columns are very small the principle cannot indeed be carried out at all, because the whole combatant portion of each column will be required to guard its magazine. The tendency, in fact, when a number of columns are employed is for each of them to be constantly dragging its supplies after it, and to be eating them up as fast as they arrive. The question of supply—always a difficult one to deal with in campaigns of this nature—is thus apt to become a greater problem when there are several columns than when there is only one single large column. But all this assumes that the regions tra-

versed are unproductive. When a reasonable amount of food and fodder can be brought in by foraging expeditions, small columns facilitate supply because the army as a whole covers a greater productive area which can be drawn upon.

In the case of the campaign about to be undertaken by Sir W. Lockhart, it is open to question whether upon the whole a number of columns would not have been advantageous from the supply and transport point of view. There were spacious cultivated lands to be found, not only in Tirah itself but also in many parts of the lower valleys which formed avenues of approach into that inner region. A distribution of force would permit of the system of living to a certain extent upon the country being more effectively put in force, than was practicable when the whole army advanced by one route as it did. On the other hand, the formidable character of the opposition that was to be expected, virtually forbade the pushing of supplies into the theatre of war on a number of lines in advance of the main bodies of a number of columns, although this plan could perhaps have been adopted safely in the case of one single large column.

Upon the whole, then, the supply and transport question could hardly be brought forward as an argument on either side in this particular case, and the main objection to splitting up the expedition into several columns lay in its wastefulness in line-of-communication troops. But all this leaves the dominating fact out of account, that the objective of the expedition was the heart of Tirah, that it was desirable to get there as speedily as practicable, brushing aside all opposition, and that, should subsequent punitive measures be necessary, it was expedient that these should be undertaken from some great camp situated within the hidden region.

The special objective made an advance by a single line desirable. The principle of a single column decided upon.—The special objective which existed in this particular campaign unquestionably rendered an advance by a single line preferable to invasion by a number of separate columns. By concentrating the army on one route, any efforts on the part of the enemy to stay its progress could easily be made abortive, a reasonable prospect was offered of inflicting a decisive defeat upon the bulk of the hostile fighting forces, only a single line of communications would have to be guarded, and but one mountain track would have to be improved into a route along which convoys could pass each other at practically any point. These were, no doubt, the considerations which governed the authorities at Army Head-quarters in arriving at their decision that there should be only one main column of invasion.

The question of the route.—The next point which had to be determined was the route which the expedition was to follow, and here again the circumstances of the case, and the geographical and topographical features of the prospective theatre of war and of the adjacent country, left a choice of courses open. To overcome the fighting forces of two tribes which between them could muster nearly 50,000 warriors, of whom a large proportion were armed with weapons of precision, a formidable array of troops was indispensable. As a matter of fact the numbers were fixed at over 30,000 men.

The question of the position of the base.—Quite apart from any question as to the route to be followed when the campaign began in earnest, the problem of collecting the supplies and warlike stores and transport animals which would be required for so large an army in some locality immediately adjacent to the border line presented itself. The military authorities were, in fact, called upon to

select a base of operations; and the considerations governing the selection were necessarily influenced by conditions beyond the frontier as well as by conditions within British territory.

Advantages and disadvantages of a base on the southern side of the theatre of war.—A glance at the map at the end of the volume will show that, from about Kohat, the border line runs roughly westwards along the southern limits of the Orakzai and Zaimukht country as far as Thal on the Kuram River. Kohat lies some thirty-two miles west of the village of Khushalghurh on the Indus, which was at the rail-head of a branch line connecting with the Indian railway system. There was a double bridge of boats at Khushalghurh. From thence a carriageable road ran to Kohat and on to Thal, skirting the eastern end of the Samana Range. Supplies and stores brought up by railway could thus be moved on from the rail-head to Kohat on wheels, and from thence westwards along a route running close to the border line. But the approaches to the bridge of boats were distinguished by awkward gradients. The road was not in perfect condition. And it must always be remembered that carriage transport in India means (or at all events meant at that time) the bullock-cart of the country, a vehicle deliberate in its movements, and driven by a type of native notoriously difficult to keep under control—the relative superiority of the railway over the carriage road as a line of military transportation is, in fact, far greater in an Indian campaign than it would be in a war in most parts of Europe. From Kohat to Shinawari, a point at the foot of the Samana Range about five miles south-west of Fort Gulistan and beyond which the road runs somewhat south-westwards fringing the Zaimukht country, was a distance of forty-six miles. Various places between Kohat and Shinawari might have served for a

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base of operations to an army advancing into the Orakzai country ; but none of them could be less than thirty-two miles, and they might be as much as seventy-eight miles from the nearest rail-head.

Thal was fully 100 miles from Khushalgarh, and the route from thence up the Kuram Valley was indifferent. There could on that account scarcely be any question of an advance in force from the Kuram River into the western end of Tirah. No further attention need therefore be given to that possible line of operations.

Question of a base in the Peshawar Valley.—But there was also the question to be considered of basing the expedition upon the Peshawar Valley, and the advantages of such a course were undoubtedly great from the point of view of the preliminary concentration of stores. A railway ran right up to Peshawar, and on this side no difficulty arose over the passage of the Indus, as was the case on the line to Kohat. Peshawar is only some fifteen miles from the border line about the mouth of the Bazar Valley or the mouth of the Bara Valley, the intervening district being level, with good carriage roads extending part of the way in either case. The massing of supplies and ordnance stores in the immediate vicinity of the enemy's country could be effected with far greater facility here than on the southern side of the prospective theatre of war. And the Peshawar Valley also offered another appreciable advantage over the country bordering on the territory of the Orakzais. From Peshawar the short line of communications to the advanced base would run at right angles to the frontier, and it could therefore be easily defended, whereas the much longer road from Kohat to Shinawari ran parallel to the border line, and was not unlikely to be interrupted by hostile raiding parties. Looked at merely from the point of view of selecting the most convenient starting-point, a locality

on the confines of the hills in the Peshawar Valley offered great advantages over any locality along the frontier on the other side of the enemy's territory.

Objections to a base in the Peshawar Valley owing to distance from objective.—But as soon as the problem comes to be looked at from the point of view of the operations to be carried out after the advance had begun, the objections to basing the expedition on the Peshawar Valley begin to become apparent. The objective of the invading column was the heart of Tirah and, although the geographical details of the open valleys lying remote amongst the mountains were little known, the approximate situation of the objective was fixed. Maidan, in Afridi Tirah, was to be the goal of Sir W. Lockhart's army in the first instance, and the distance of this locality from any portion of the Peshawar Valley is fully double as great as its distance from the border line in the vicinity of the Samana posts. If, before the campaign commenced in earnest, far greater transport difficulties would be involved in bringing stores from Khushalgurh to near Shinawari than in bringing them from Peshawar to the mouth of the Bazar or Bara valleys, this was, after all, merely a question of providing sufficient bullock-carts and camels. These, although costly, were not unobtainable. But the greater length of any route leading into Tirah from the Peshawar Valley as compared with routes from the south, was a question of military pack transport. A sufficiency of this was very difficult to procure in any case, and the campaigns in progress elsewhere had already absorbed thousands of animals of this class. This circumstance in itself suggested that the transport and supply problem would make the choice of a base on the southern side unavoidable.

But other considerations besides supply and transport had of course to be kept in view. Supposing that an

advance from the Peshawar Valley were decided upon, there could be little difference of opinion as to the expediency of a line of operations, which would, at least, start up the Bara Valley. An advance up the more northerly Bazar Valley was tempting in that for some twenty miles or so the troops would be traversing a region which had been the scene of an earlier campaign, and which was therefore fairly well known, while the Bara Valley, from its mouth upwards, was virtually *terra incognita*, although it had been visited by an officer in 1872; but supposing that this Bazar Valley line of operations were selected, it would in the end become necessary to effect a passage over the range separating the two valleys by a route about which there was very little information, but which was understood to be a particularly difficult track.

Were an advance from a point at the opening out of the Bara Valley to be decided upon, it was almost inevitable, in view of the very limited knowledge with regard to the topography of the interior which was available, that the expedition would follow the course of that stream. This would involve a march of over forty miles before reaching those open valleys about its head-waters which constitute the richest lands possessed by the Afridis. It is true that a somewhat directer route ran westwards from near the junction of the Mastura with the Bara, cutting off the big southerly loop which the former stream makes before joining the larger river; an advance by this line would have shortened the distance into the heart of Tirah by some miles, but the track (which was followed by one Division when evacuating the country in December) was one not much used by the tribesmen themselves, and very little was known about it. It should furthermore be noted that a movement up the Bara led right through the Afridi country and practically would not touch the Orakzais.

***Advantages of a base to the south after the advance once began.**—An advance from almost any point along the road from Kohat to Shinawari, on the other hand, led at once into the Orakzai country, and this circumstance in itself provided a strong argument in favour of operating from that side of the theatre of war. The Orakzais were a less resolute and less warlike race than the tribe with which they were in league. They, moreover, were not so numerous as their confederates, nor were they as well armed. It was a fair assumption that a march right through their country into their section of Tirah—considerably the smaller section—would have the effect of detaching most, if not all, of their clans from the coalition, and of leaving the Afridis to bear the brunt of any further fighting almost, if not wholly, unaided.

The line by the Sempagha Pass.—Although the veil had yet to be lifted from the Tirah of the Orakzais, previous campaigns had made the Intelligence Department fairly well acquainted with certain stretches of the Khanki Valley, and it was known that the point within the Indian borders nearest to the neighbourhood of Maidan in Afridi Tirah was Shinawari. The Samana posts were somewhat nearer, but they were within Orakzai territory. From Shinawari to the Sempagha Pass which leads over into the upper Mastura Valley is only about fifteen miles, as the crow flies. By the shortest available track the distance is not more than nineteen miles. The Sempagha Pass formed one of the main gateways into Tirah, the track had been examined up to within a mile or two of its summit by a reconnoitring party on the occasion of the Miranzai expedition of 1891, and the route had on that occasion been for some time in occupation of the troops up to some distance beyond where it passes the Khanki River. The country about the Samana defences was, of course,

well known, and the Sempagha Pass was actually visible from near Fort Lockhart. The route from Shinawari to the pass, moreover, traversed the very middle of the Orakzai country from south to north, and if a successful advance were made along this line into Tirah, the territory of one of the two allied tribes would be cut in half. It was undoubtedly the shortest avenue from India leading to the objective; it was known practically up to the confines of the district which was the goal of the expedition; there seemed to be grounds for hoping that the tribesmen would make their great stand on the Sempagha Pass, and afford the troops an opportunity of inflicting a heavy defeat upon the enemy as soon as they were ready to deliver their attack; and the result of such a victory would be the immediate occupation of the summer home of the Orakzais in the Mastura Valley, which would probably bring the whole of that tribe to its knees.

The advantages offered by this line of operations were undoubtedly great. Nor did any other route from the southern side appear to be as promising. Although the road from Khushalgarh up to the starting-point would necessarily be shorter, an advance from near Kohat up the valley of the Kariach River meant afterwards a longer march through mountainous country in occupation of the enemy, before Tirah was attained. Operations from the Kuram Valley on a large scale were precluded by the distance from the railway. Except for the distance of the starting-point from Khushalgarh, everything seemed, indeed, to point to the selection of the line of operations from Shinawari and the Samana posts direct on the Sempagha Pass. The advantages of this route after active operations began seemed upon the whole to outweigh the disadvantages arising from the length and the comparative exposure of the preliminary line of communications.

It is decided upon.—Very careful considerations must have been given at Simla to the various aspects of the problem which an attempt has been made to explain in the foregoing paragraphs, and this route was finally selected as that which the main army was to use. A subsidiary column was to assemble about the mouth of the Bara Valley, south-west of Peshawar, and another smaller mobile column was to be organised in the Kuram Valley. But these were only to be available to act in certain eventualities. For practical purposes the plan of campaign decided upon was that one great column should advance from about Shinawari by the shortest route into Tirah.

CHAPTER III

THE MUSTERING OF THE OPPOSING FORCES

It will be convenient at this point to indicate shortly what was to be the general organisation of the Tirah Field Force. Its composition in detail is given in Appendix II.

Constitution of the Main Column.—The Main Column, which was to be under the personal command of Sir W. Lockhart and which was to concentrate in the first instance at Shinawari and about the Samana posts, was to consist of two divisions and of a proportion of line-of-communication troops. The 1st Division was to be commanded by Brigadier-General W. P. Symonds, the 1st Brigade being under Colonel I. S. Hamilton (who, however, met with an accident before the campaign commenced and was relieved by Brigadier-General R. C. Hart), and the 2nd Brigade being under Brigadier-General A. Gaselee. The 2nd Division was to be commanded by Major-General A. G. Yeatman-Biggs, who was already on the Samana; the 3rd Brigade was to be commanded by Brigadier-General F. G. Kempster, and the 4th Brigade by Brigadier-General R. Westmacott. Each of the four brigades was formed of two battalions of British infantry and two battalions of native infantry, with a suitable hospital establishment; the Divisional Troops, supernumerary to the brigades, comprised in each case three mountain batteries, two squadrons of native cavalry, a battalion of pioneers, and a battalion of native infantry, besides sappers and miners

and hospital establishments. Thus the actual mobile portion of the Main Column was made up of eight battalions of British infantry, twelve battalions of native infantry (two of which were pioneer battalions), six mountain batteries and four squadrons. Its approximate strength was 18,700 of all ranks, with 36 guns.

The line-of-communication troops forming part of the Main Column were placed under the orders of Lieutenant-General Sir A. P. Palmer, who was appointed General of Communications, and whose responsibilities were to extend back from the front as far as Khushalgurh. The troops at his disposal consisted of four battalions of native infantry, a mountain battery, and two regiments of native cavalry, besides sappers and miners, hospitals, field parks, etc. All told, these troops mounted up to about 5000 of all ranks.

The additional forces.—The Peshawar Column, to be commanded by Brigadier-General A. G. Hammond, was to consist of two battalions of British infantry, three battalions of native infantry, a regiment of native cavalry, a field battery, a mountain battery, and a proportion of sappers and miners and of hospital establishments. The strength of this column was approximately 4500 of all ranks.

The Kuram Movable Column under Colonel W. Hill was to be made up of two battalions of native infantry, four field-guns, and two native cavalry regiments, making all told about 2600 of all ranks.

In addition to the above-named columns, it was decided that a Reserve Brigade should be organised at Rawalpindi, to be under command of Colonel C. R. Macgregor. This was to be composed of two battalions of British infantry, two battalions of native infantry, and a regiment of native cavalry; its strength would be about 3200. Excluding these reserve troops, the grand total of the Tirah Field

Force amounted to about 31,000 of all ranks, with some 18,000 followers. The transport of the Main Column alone, with its line-of-communication troops, amounted to about 29,000 mules and ponies and about 13,000 camels and bullock-carts.

Comments.—There are certain points in connection with the organisation and composition of the Field Force which deserve a few observations. It might be objected that, for a main force consisting of only four infantry brigades with a complement of artillery and other troops, a divisional organisation, involving as it did two extra generals with their staffs, was unnecessary. But it was desirable to provide for the contingency of breaking up the force to some extent after it had penetrated into Tirah ; and as a matter of fact the two Divisions retired out of the country by separate and divergent routes. It will be noticed that the mobile portion of the Main Column, numbering nearly 19,000 men, included only one single cavalry regiment ; but the region which was to be the scene of active operations was known to be so rugged that the military authorities could calculate upon mounted troops only finding opportunities occasionally for acting with any advantage. Sir Power Palmer and Colonel Hill, on the other hand, were each given two cavalry regiments to enable them to deal rapidly and effectively with any raids which the tribesmen might attempt to make into the comparatively speaking level country about the Kohat-Shinawari road and in the Kuram Valley. The mobile portion of the Main Column had a relatively large proportion of troops skilled in road-making and pioneer work allotted to it, in view of the heavy labour likely to be called for in converting mountain tracks into bridle-paths fit for pack-transport to use ; they comprised in all two pioneer battalions and five companies of sappers and miners.

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The assembling of the forces. Delays at the outset.—The concentration of the forces at Shinawari and about the Samana post was not commenced in earnest until the middle of October. But from the moment that the general plan of campaign had been decided upon, the massing of supplies and of stores of all kinds for the expedition at Kohat and at the advanced base had been proceeded with as rapidly as the limited amount of transport available at the time would permit of. This preliminary work had, however, proved a more troublesome operation than had been anticipated. The orders from Simla had been that two months' supplies for the Main Column were to be collected at Shinawari. Practically the whole of these, except some of the forage, had to be conveyed a total distance of 78 miles from the Indus in bullock-carts and on the backs of camels. The difficulty was increased by the fact that the country alongside of the road was speedily swept bare of forage, so that the transport animals working backwards and forwards along the route had themselves to be supplied from the rear. A further difficulty arose owing to the circumstance that a considerable force had already been pushed out to some distance beyond Kohat in consequence of the aggressive raiding of the Orakzais at the end of August and the beginning of September, and in view of the likelihood that further enterprises of the same kind might be attempted; these advanced troops had of course to be provided for, at the same time as food-stuffs and stores were being pushed forward in anticipation of the general advance. The supplies were in the first place moved from Khushalgurh to Kohat; and it was not till the early days of October that sufficient transport was available to begin pushing them forward on a large scale along the road to Shinawari. The distance represented four ordinary marches for transport.

The troops to form the Main Column concentrated in the first instance at Kohat. Some of them, those coming from Peshawar, marched over the Kohat Pass through the country of the Adam Khel Afridis; they were prepared for all eventualities, but, as it turned out, no opposition was offered to their passage of the defile as this particular clan loyally observed its engagements. The rest of the troops, apart from those already at the front, were brought up by railway to Khushalgurh, and they marched from thence to Kohat. It had been intended that the movement should be continued from Kohat to Shinawari at the beginning of October; but the transport difficulties had been altogether underestimated. Not only was the collection of supplies at the advanced base taking longer than had been anticipated, but the necessary animals were not yet available to mobilise the units for their mountain operations. Moreover, several units which had been detailed to form part of the expeditionary force were still engaged during September in the troublesome campaign which was proceeding against the Mohmunds and neighbouring tribes north of the Peshawar Valley, and these did not become available for the Tirah Field Force as soon as had been hoped.

The concentration at Shinawari completed.—But from the 10th to the 18th, the forward march of the troops from Kohat proceeded without intermission; and on the latter day the two divisions which formed the mobile portion of the Main Column were assembled at Shinawari, with the exception of certain corps which were already encamped about the Samana posts and of a few units of the 1st Division still on the march from Kohat. The troops which had been on the spot for some time, and which consisted largely of pioneers and of sappers and miners, had in the meantime been hard at work improving the tracks which lead forward

from Shinawari and from the Samana posts towards Karappa on the Khanki River; the sketch plans facing page 56 shows these tracks. But their labours had been confined mainly to the nearer stretches, because the presence of some bodies of hostile tribesmen forbade the pushing forward of the working parties far in advance. From the 11th to the 17th of October these working parties were fired upon daily, and the supporting troops indulged in some smart brushes with the Orakzais.

Preparations of the enemy.—Something remains to be said with regard to the attitude of the enemy. It had not been till the early days of October that the tribesmen whose outrages were the cause of all these elaborate preparations, appear to have fully realised that a campaign on an imposing scale was about to be opened against them, and that they began to take steps to confront the danger menacing them. However, the headmen of nearly all of the Afridi and Orakzai clans met in solemn conclave at Bagh in Afridi Tirah at the beginning of the month, to decide upon a course of action. A most warlike tone prevailed at this conference, and an oath was taken upon the Koran to the effect that if any individual tribe or section were to come to terms with the Indian Government and were to make an agreement which did not include the entire coalition, then that tribe or section was to be publicly cursed as a foe to Islam. This spirited decision did not, however, restrain the Orakzais of the Khanki Valley from offering submission to General Yeatman-Biggs two or three days later; but that officer refused to treat with their emissaries so long as raiding parties continued to harass his outposts on the Samana. Thereupon, on the 10th, the Orakzais made up their minds to take their stand on the Sempagha Pass, which was already being elaborately fortified with breastworks and sangas. A few days later

the headmen arranged that certain of those Afridi clans which had their homes nearest to the pass and to the Khanki River were to support the Orakzais, while for the present the more northerly clans were to watch the Khyber and were to be prepared to meet any advance up the Bazar or Bara valleys.

The fighting characteristics of the tribesmen.—Before closing this chapter it will be convenient to give some further details as to the armament and the fighting methods of the highlanders into whose country the Tirah Field Force was about to force its way. All tribesmen of the North-West Frontier can be classed as exceptionally fine mountaineers; but the Afridis are pre-eminent in this respect. Their grass shoes and their agility enable them to move with astonishing rapidity over the most rugged ground, and they enjoy the further advantage of being acquainted with every goat-track leading through their territory. Like most savages they can see far better in the dark than Europeans can, which renders them particularly formidable at night and when the evening is closing in. The Pathans in general are admirable marksmen, even when depending on indifferent firearms; but the Afridis in 1897 owned large numbers of modern rifles, their wealth enabling them to purchase these weapons in the bazaars of Afghanistan and the Panjab, and they had abundance of ammunition in their possession—this circumstance in reality introduced an entirely new feature into the conditions of the contest. Moreover, many of the Afridis and of the Orakzais had served in the Indian army, and fully understood its tactical methods. A great advantage which these hillmen furthermore enjoy in combat is that, quite apart from the aptitude which they invariably display for concealing themselves, their presence is difficult to detect owing to the colour of their dirty garments being in-

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distinguishable from that of the crags and boulders amongst which they lurk. Capable of living for several days on the grain which he is able to carry with him, the Pathan of the Panjab border is far less encumbered than the regular soldier is with impedimenta to his movements, whether in the shape of personal equipment or of transport train. And there is also another respect in which disciplined troops are always severely handicapped during struggles with these marauding cut-throats.

In civilised warfare the dead and wounded can be left on the field of battle. But in Indian frontier campaigns, as in most cases of contests with irregular warriors, the wounded may not be abandoned to the tender mercies of the foe ; and, as it is the practice of these ferocious adversaries to dishonour the dead, those who have fallen have to be carried off if it be possible. This removal of the dead and wounded is one of the most difficult of the tasks which may have to be performed during an affray with Pathan tribesmen. It takes four men to carry a wounded comrade, and another man to carry the weapons of the party ; so that a single badly wounded soldier may mean a loss of six rifles out of the firing line, and that a heavy casualty list in some detachment speedily deprives it of its fighting power. The knot of men carrying an injured comrade, moreover, offers an easy mark to the hostile marksmen of which they are apt to take full advantage, so that one casualty tends to beget others.

The antagonists whom the Anglo-Indian forces had to overcome in Tirah were thus formidable opponents. They were a race of marksmen well provided with arms and ammunition, practised from childhood in broils amongst the gorges and on the hill-tops of the almost inaccessible region which forms their native land, and endowed with that cunning which no amount of training

will instil into the soldier recruited in a civilised country. There were nearly fifty thousand of them available to defend their territory should all of the clans put forward their full strength. But the mutual antagonisms between some of the tribal subdivision, and the disinclination to run the risk of severe punishment on the part of others, tended to considerably decrease the total numbers which were at different times to be pitted against the troops under Sir W. Lockhart's command.

CHAPTER IV

THE ADVANCE INTO THE KHANKI VALLEY AND THE TWO COMBATS OF DARGAI

The delay in the advance unfortunate.—The first stage on the line of advance from Shinawari and the Samana posts towards the Sempagha Pass and Tirah was the Khanki River.¹ Its valley at this point contained some stretches of level ground suitable for encampments, with water and forage near at hand. Its distance from Shinawari was about thirteen miles over the top of the Samana Range; the lower parts of this range were some 2500 feet above the encampment of the Field Force.

The delay which had occurred in collecting the necessary supplies and stores preparatory to a forward movement, and in concentrating the various units intended to make up the invading army, had been quite unavoidable. But it was none the less somewhat unfortunate, seeing that it reduced still further the limited amount of time available for chastising the enemy and for overrunning the unknown region which formed the goal of the expedition. It had been ascertained that the cold in the higher valleys becomes extreme in the early part of December, and that a snowfall is generally to be expected by the middle of that month. As the troops were to be lightly equipped with a view

¹ The sketch-map facing page 132 will be found useful in this chapter and the next; that facing page 56 illustrates portions of this chapter.

to securing a maximum of mobility to the force, it was fully foreseen from the outset that it would become practically impossible to remain in these chilly uplands after the early days of that month. Thus, only seven or eight weeks could be calculated upon for the prosecution of active operations.

The line from Shinawari to the Khanki.—That being the case, Sir W. Lockhart lost not a moment in commencing his campaign as soon as the concentration of the Field Force was virtually complete, and on the 17th of October he issued his orders for the advance into the Khanki Valley. For the bulk of the force then assembled and assembling, this meant the crossing of the Samana Range at a dip in the ridge known as the Chagru Kotal.¹ The lie of the country in the immediate vicinity of the kotal, which was almost immediately to become the scene of stirring events, is shown in the sketch facing page 56. The track up to it, about six miles of steady ascent from Shinawari, had been greatly improved during the previous few days, and a fair bridle-path had already been cut for a mile or so down the far side. It lies about two miles to the west of Fort Gulistan, a considerably higher point known as the Samana Suk intervening between the two. After surmounting the kotal the track descended the left or western side of a deep ravine running down to the Khanki near a place called Karappa, which is about seven miles farther on. Very little water was to be found along the route till the troops arrived at the Khanki, so that it was necessary to cover the whole thirteen miles in a single march if possible. But that this might prove somewhat difficult was obvious, in view of the fact that numbers of tribesmen were showing themselves on high ground a mile or so to the west of the

¹ "Kotal" means the summit of a pass, and is equivalent to the French word *col*.

kotal, and that these had been seriously interfering with the working parties.

The first orders for the advance.—The general orders for the advance were to the effect that on the 20th the 3rd Brigade, together with a mountain battery and some additional troops, was to move forward under General Yeatman-Biggs from Shinawari on Karappa, while a smaller column was to move down from the Samana posts along a spur to the east of the Chagru Kotal-Karappa track, so as to protect General Yeatman-Biggs' right flank. On the 21st the 4th Brigade was to follow the 3rd, and on the 22nd the 2nd Division was to cross the Khanki and to move on about two miles, while the 1st Division moved from Shinawari to Karappa. On the 23rd the 2nd Division was to advance about two miles to Gandaki at the foot of the Sempagha Pass, and the 1st Division was to move forward two miles. Line-of-communication troops were in the meantime to form posts to protect the road.

Comments.—As will be seen later, these orders could only be partially carried out. But there are one or two points in connection with them which seem to call for some remark. It is open to question, for instance, whether, on broad military grounds, the plan of issuing orders for several days' operations in advance is one to be commended. Experience proves that events far ahead can rarely be foreseen with any accuracy in any kind of country from the moment when the opposing forces once come into contact. The records of a long series of hill campaigns on the Indian frontier might well have taught the lesson that it is impossible to calculate how long a march will take in the very rugged terrain which normally constitutes the theatre of operations, especially when the topographical details are but imperfectly known. It is

obviously inexpedient that orders when once issued should be countermanded, or that they should have to be modified in vital particulars. A properly trained staff in touch with European methods would perhaps hardly have committed itself to so elaborate a programme as that issued on the 17th of October, 1897.

It must be added that the difficulty of getting huge trains of pack animals along indifferent mountain tracks seems hardly to have been realised at the outset, although an operation of this kind was not a novelty amongst the trans-Indus border hills. The route from the Chagru Kotal to Karappa was not absolutely unknown; it was understood to be bad throughout, and it had only been improved by the working parties for a short distance down the farther side of the Samana Range. Yet only two days were allowed to move the entire 2nd Division with its impedimenta to the Khanki, before the 1st Division was to be launched on the top of it. Now, although two of its battalions and a battery were at Fort Lockhart and were to move by another route, the total length of the 2nd Division with its supply column which was to march from Shinawari to Karappa, would be about sixteen miles, if on the road at the same time with the transport moving in single file—that is to say, the distance being thirteen miles, the head of the column might be on the Khanki before the tail moved out of the Shinawari camp. The transport train when properly closed up covered six and a half miles, and a long series of small wars has proved that a caravan of this kind on a difficult hill track is never properly closed up. The orders did not, it is true, propose that the whole division should move on the one day, but a certain amount of opposition had to be anticipated. The first stage to the Khanki carried the force up to within about six miles of the Sempagha

Pass. It might perhaps have been considered whether, quite apart from anything that the enemy might do, it would not have been better to have drawn up plans for the preliminary advance on the principle of retaining the 1st Division at the base for a day or two longer, and of in the meantime pushing supplies over behind the 2nd Division up to the immediate vicinity of the portals into Tirah. The underlying idea of the order was to hustle the whole of the fighting part of the force along as fast as possible, with its impedimenta trailing behind it.

The orders for October 18th.—Instructions were also issued on the 17th for a preliminary operation to be carried out next day under the orders of Sir Power Palmer, General Yeatman-Biggs being indisposed. The main object of the scheme was to clear some bodies of Orakzais who had been harassing the working parties, off the high ground to the west of the Chagru Kotal. But the movement was also to partake of the nature of a reconnaissance. It had been reported that a track crossed the Samana a few miles to the west of the kotal, and Sir W. Lockhart wished to know how far this route was practicable. There was also some idea of imposing upon the enemy, and of deluding the tribesmen into the belief that the main advance was actually going to take place by this western route; the road-making parties about the Chagru Kotal had, however, already given a pretty clear indication to the tribesmen as to the point from which they were to expect the main danger.

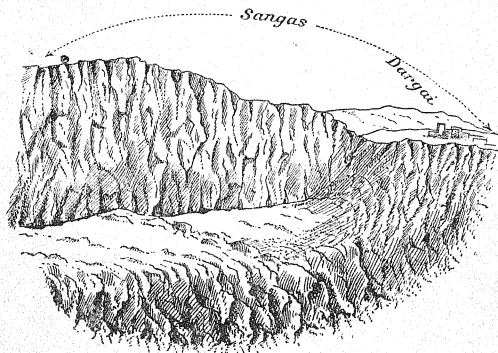
The plan for the day's work on the 18th was that one force, the 4th Brigade supported by a couple of batteries, was to attack the heights from the kotal. Another force, consisting of three battalions of the 3rd Brigade and a battery, was to make a detour from Shinawari to the westward, and was then to scale the hills from that side, so as

to come in on the enemy's flank and rear. This second force was to reconnoitre the country to the west of the kotal as far as practicable, and was, if possible, to ascertain the character of the route over the Samana which had been reported to exist on that side; it marched out of camp at 4 a.m.

The operations of the 18th.—General Westmacott started for the kotal with the 4th Brigade about an hour later, and had arrived there by 9 a.m.; he found the heights which he was to attack occupied in considerable force by the hillmen, and although there was no sign of the other column approaching he at once made his dispositions for dislodging them from their position.

The ground about the Chagru Kotal and Dargai.—As the ground over which General Westmacott delivered this attack was destined to be the scene of severe fighting of considerable tactical interest, both on this day and again on the 20th, a somewhat detailed description of its main features is necessary. The sketch plan facing page 56 will be found of assistance in realising the general nature of a somewhat intricate field of battle. The high ground on which the tribesmen were assembled, and which was the objective of the assailants, has a general elevation of some 1000 feet or so above the Chagru Kotal, from which it is distant about 1500 yards; what may be called the spine of the Samana Range rises sharply from the kotal in a westerly direction towards this high ground, forming a well-defined ridge leading up to it. Towards the kotal the heights present what is practically a long line of precipices facing south-eastwards. The ridge abuts against these precipices, which extend for some distance north-eastwards and more or less dominate a long depression down which the track led from the kotal towards Karappa; then the heights sink gradually towards the Khanki Valley.

It will be seen on the plan that the ridge, after running westwards from the kotal till it is close to the escarpment of the heights, makes a kink to the north just before it meets them. From the point where it thus changes direction its slopes on either hand become steep declivities. Both on the 18th and 20th of October the result of this configuration of the ridge was that, as long as it runs westwards, it



THE DARGAI BLUFF

formed a sort of covered way leading towards the heights from the kotal, because troops working along its southern slopes were concealed from the enemy's position. But it transformed itself into a causeway from the spot where it takes the turn to the north, because beyond that advance became possible only along the top.

At the point where the ridge actually abuts on the higher ground, this is not inaccessible. There is here a narrow

stretch of steep slope in place of precipice, and up this slope led a track which had followed the crest of the ridge from the kotal. The enemy had constructed sangas on the summit on either side of the place where the track climbed up, and these sangas most effectively commanded the ridge beyond the spot where it changes direction. This spot was only about 300 yards from the sangas, so that from the stage where the troops advancing to the attack became obliged to advance along the crest of the ridge, fully exposed, they were necessarily under a musketry fire at close range. It was easy enough, in fact, to get up to within a very short distance of the hostile defences; but when it came to the last 300 yards there was a very awkward stretch of ground to traverse. Fortunately, however, there was some dead ground at the actual foot of the bluff unless the defenders chose to greatly expose themselves. It should be added that on the crest, a little way back from the point where the track tops it, is situated the village of Dargai, and that the ground on the far side slopes away north-westwards, affording plenty of cover to the tribesmen.

General Westmacott's assault on the Dargai bluff.—On his troops reaching the kotal, General Westmacott promptly brought his guns into action against the hostile position, and he then set his infantry in motion along the southern face of the ridge leading towards Dargai, the 3rd Ghurkas being in advance, followed by the King's Own Scottish Borderers; the Northamptons were kept in reserve. The Ghurkas pressed rapidly upwards until they arrived at the point beyond which it was necessary to advance along the top of the ridge under close-range fire. Taking the enemy apparently somewhat by surprise, they rushed across this exposed stretch through a hail of bullets, followed by the Borderers, and they had no sooner

reached the dead ground at the foot of the precipitous bluffs than the enemy abandoned the crest. The assailants were in consequence able, in spite of the narrowness of the track, to scramble up the steep slope and on to the crest, practically unopposed. It was a signal success, and it had been achieved at the cost of only nineteen casualties. But the capture of the heights had no doubt been facilitated by the approach of the other column, which was beginning to make its presence felt although still at some distance. Its advanced troops were, indeed, able to bring long range musketry to bear upon the tribesmen as they fled from Dargai.

The work of the other column.—Although almost unopposed, this column had experienced extraordinary difficulties in its advance, on account of the extreme ruggedness of the ground and of the steep declivities which had to be surmounted. Its mountain battery had to be sent back to Shinawari—an unfortunate circumstance, seeing that gun fire might have proved very damaging to the enemy when the tribesmen hurried off from Dargai. Eventually the two columns came into close contact on the heights about 2 p.m. They were then faced with the prospect of a long retirement to Shinawari, and with the certainty of darkness closing in upon them long before the bulk of the troops could hope to reach camp.

The retirement.—As the afternoon proceeded, the enemy began to gather in great strength to the north of Dargai. Swarms of tribesmen were observed to be streaming up out of the Khanki Valley to participate in the fray should a favourable opportunity offer itself. General Westmacott's brigade moved off first by the route along the ridge to the Chagru Kotal. It experienced no difficulty in its withdrawal, being covered by General Kempster's battalions. These did not begin to clear the high ground about Dargai

till 4 p.m., following the other brigade towards Chagru Kotal. The tribesmen in the meantime grew more and more aggressive as the force on the top dwindled. Finally the two rear battalions, the Gordons and the 15th Sikhs, were called upon to fight a difficult rear-guard action as they abandoned the crest and retired along the ridge towards the kotal, and both regiments lost somewhat heavily as they traversed the exposed portion with the tribesmen firing down on them. Owing to the growing darkness the guns could afford no assistance, and they moved off towards Shinawari. But the pursuers showed no great inclination for pressing on the rear after the troops were once well clear of the bluff even though these were encumbered with wounded, and no fighting took place after the tail of the rear-guard had reached the kotal. The last of the troops did not, however, arrive in camp until 11 p.m., after an exceptionally long and exhausting day of marching and of fighting.

Comments on the day's operations.—The first combat of Dargai affords a remarkable illustration of the difficulty of ensuring that two separate forces, moving by converging routes, shall combine effectively in a tactical operation in a mountainous country, and this even in spite of the facilities which such terrain usually offers for signalling. The capture of the enemy's fortified position was carried out by the right column, practically unassisted. How arduous its task might have proved, was shown by what occurred on the same spot two days later, and by the numerous casualties suffered by the other column when retiring over the same ground in the evening.

The re-occupation by the enemy of the heights which had been so gallantly won, gave rise at the time to some sharp criticisms of Sir W. Lockhart's arrangements on the part of writers who were not acquainted with the

actual conditions of the case. A force could hardly under the circumstances have been left at Dargai that night. The object of the day's operations had partaken very largely of the nature of a reconnaissance. The arrival of large bodies of Orakzais and Afridis from the Khanki Valley was unexpected. The troops were not equipped for holding a position perched on heights more than 6000 feet above the sea and eight miles from camp. A large force would have had to remain, because the water supply happened to be a considerable distance from the village of Dargai, and the approaches to this water supply must have been made secure. The enemy, moreover, were gathering in great force during the afternoon, and the determined onslaughts which had been delivered against the strong fort of Gulistan six weeks before, showed that the troops had to do with a foe who was not unprepared at times to accept risks and to act with temerity.

The 19th.—The 19th was a day of rest for the troops. It had been intended that work should be continued on the route towards Karappa ; but after their severe exertions of the previous day, General Yeatman-Biggs did not think himself justified in calling upon his men for another effort. By some misunderstanding, which rather suggests defective staff arrangements, Sir W. Lockhart was not informed of this, and so the 1st Division was not turned on to the task in place of the 2nd Division.

Modification of the original plan for the 20th.—That evening General Yeatman-Biggs, who, it will be remembered, was by the original orders of the 17th to advance on Karappa on the following day with the 3rd Brigade and some additional troops, suggested to the Commander-in-Chief that, as the enemy was evidently again in strong force on the heights which had been captured and had been abandoned the previous day, it would be best for the force

to make a detour round the eastern side of the Samana Suk and to move down the long Talia spur (*vide* sketch plan facing p. 56). By taking this route he would avoid having to file along the ravine skirting the base of the high ground in occupation of the tribesmen. But Sir W. Lockhart knew that the track down the Talia spur was nothing but a goat-path dropping down over steep declivities through scrub-clad, intricate terrain, a track along which laden pack animals would find great difficulty in making their way. It seemed to him, moreover, that the proposed detour would be interpreted by the Pathans as a sign of timidity. He gave instructions, therefore, that the direct route from the Chagru Kotal was to be followed, as had originally been intended; but he arranged that the whole of the 2nd Division (except for the 36th Sikhs who were to remain at Fort Lockhart) should be put in motion, and that the Derbyshires, the 3rd Sikhs, and a battery should furthermore be placed at General Yeatman-Biggs' disposal from the 1st Division. The total force was thus made up to ten battalions and four batteries, without counting pioneers and sappers and miners. In communicating the Commander-in-Chief's decision to the general officer commanding the 2nd Division it was pointed out that as soon as the column reached a point about three miles beyond the kotal, where a subsidiary valley comes in from the left, it would begin to seriously threaten the communications of any tribesmen who had taken post about Dargai with the Khanki Valley, and that this would probably lead to the evacuation of the heights by the enemy.

The advance on the 20th.—The advance began before daybreak on the 20th. General Kempster's brigade took the lead, followed by the troops of the 1st Division which had been especially detailed to assist; the two battalions of the 4th Brigade brought up the rear, with the transport

train (the Northhamptons and 36th Sikhs were already on the Samana). The leading troops arrived at the kotal by 8 a.m., and it became apparent that the heights about Dargai were occupied by great numbers of tribesmen who were swarming all over the high ground. A strong force of them was to be seen on a ridge to the south, evidently expecting an advance from the same direction as General Kempster's troops had come from on the 18th.

General Kempster ordered to attack Dargai.—General Yeatman-Biggs thereupon determined to capture the heights before proceeding farther, and he directed General Kempster to carry out the attack.

The Northhamptons and a battery from Fort Lockhart were at hand, and they formed up in reserve on the Samana Suk; three batteries took up a position near the kotal; the 2nd Ghurkas and some of the Ghurka Scouts¹ were sent along the southern face of the ridge leading up to Dargai, supported by the Dorsets, with the Derbyshires in second line. The Gordons moved forward behind them to a position about 1000 yards from the enemy's position, so as to assist with long-range volleys. The 3rd Sikhs remained on the kotal, and the remainder of the force gradually followed, disposing itself as best it could about the route leading up from Shinawari.

The attack on the bluff.—It was about 9.30 a.m. when the enemy opened fire from the Dargai ridge, and soon afterwards the guns began to reply; the batteries near the kotal were firing at about 1800 yards range, that on the Samana Suk at about 3000 yards. There had necessarily been some delay in making the arrangements, and it was not till about 11 a.m. that the Ghurkas had climbed up to the point where it became unavoidable for them to advance along the saddle, completely exposed to the fire of the

¹ See Appendix II as to the Ghurka Scouts.

tribesmen in their sangas on the crest. After a brief pause the leading wing dashed forward with the Scouts, and managed, in spite of a murderous fire, to reach a low transverse ridge of rocks more than half-way across the dangerous zone, which afforded fairly good shelter. But these leading troops could get no farther, and when the other wing of the regiment tried to follow it was brought up short by the hail of bullets, and could make no headway. The enemy were now fully on the alert, and the ground did not lend itself to the development of an effective covering rifle fire from infantry in support. Parties of the Dorsets more than once made desperate efforts to rush across the deadly zone to join the Ghurkas who were cowering among the rocks in front; but only a very few individuals managed to escape the deadly marksmanship from above. The Derbyshires had come up, and they made similar attempts. But each clump of men that dashed forward melted away under the converging and accurate fire, and after a time affairs came practically to a standstill.

The troops brought to a standstill.—The exposed stretch was by this time strewn with dead. The bluff so completely dominated all the accessible ground between it and the kotal that it was impossible to bring an effective musketry fire to bear on the sangas in which the tribesmen were ensconced. It was obvious that the intermittent artillery fire was having no result. The tactical situation made it plain that the defenders of the heights were fully alive to the benefits which the peculiar conformation of the hills about the spot where they were making their stand, was conferring upon them. It was already past midday, and the plight of the 2nd Division was becoming very serious. Only six miles of the contemplated march to Karappa had been covered, and the destination was still some seven miles off along what was known to be

a most indifferent route. The pack animals, which had been loaded up before dawn, were standing in long strings on the road up from Shinawari, and it was of course impossible to relieve them of their burdens. A check at this early stage of the campaign might well have disastrous results.

General Yeatman-Biggs orders the position to be taken at all costs.—So General Yeatman-Biggs, realising that his force was now definitely committed to the venture of taking the heights by a frontal attack, sent a message to General Kempster to say that the position must be captured at all costs. General Kempster at once proceeded to the front, taking with him the Gordons, followed by the 3rd Sikhs. These fresh troops made their way rapidly up to where the Dorsets, Derbyshires and some of the Ghurkas were drawn up under cover, just short of the exposed stretch where such heavy loss had occurred. The three companies of Ghurkas which had got part of the way across the danger zone, had now been more than three hours crouching among the rocks in their advanced position. Thus five battalions were assembled immediately in front of the enemy's natural fortress on the crest of the heights. Then, when all was ready, a communication was sent by helio to the officer commanding the artillery, requesting that the batteries should deliver a rapid concentrated fire upon the sangas for three minutes. Colonel Mathias, commanding the Gordons, brought his men up to the front ready for a rush, and as soon as the artillery had played its part, called on his regiment for their effort.

The Gordons' charge.—In quick succession of companies the highlanders streamed out over the open bullet-swept ground, regardless of their losses, and gained some semblance of cover half-way across, where there was a momentary pause. Then another rush carried them to the

rocks where the Ghurkas were sheltering. The Sikhs followed in another swarm, with detachments of Dorsets and Derbyshires and Ghurkas joining in, and a final rush was made to the base of the cliffs. After a few moments to recover breath in this well-sheltered ground, the troops began to make their way up the steep track leading up to the crest. But the Pathans were cowed by the spectacle of the intrepid advance and were already in full retreat, so that the final stage of the assailants' dangerous journey was compassed without opposition. By the time that the panting soldiers had gained the summit, just after 3 p.m., the defenders were already hurrying off at a distance of some hundreds of yards, and only a few long-range volleys could be brought to bear on them before they vanished into the ravines leading down to the Khanki Valley.

Capture of the position.—The fight was over for the day, but the position had not been wrested from the enemy without a somewhat heavy sacrifice. The total casualties amounted to 200, more than a third of which were borne by the Ghurkas; the Gordons had only lost 44 officers and men in their triumphant rush. The tribesmen had also undoubtedly suffered some casualties; but they had removed their dead and wounded, and as they had been admirably protected and had exposed themselves little, it is unlikely that many of them were hit. It is believed that about 6000 Orakzais and 6000 Afridis were present during the combat; but only a fraction of this multitude was actually posted on the crest near Dargai, and the whole mass of them retreated precipitately northwards as soon as they perceived that the issue was virtually decided.

Arrangements for the night.—The 3rd Sikhs and Dorsets were left to secure the ground that had been so hardly won, while the other three battalions moved back to about the Chagru Kotal. The whole force bivouacked as best it

could ; and, as the transport was blocked on the road, most of the troops had to pass the night without either food or blankets. Firewood and water were very scarce and much discomfort was suffered, for the cold, even at that early time of the year, is apt to be bitter on the Indian frontier at so high an altitude.

Comments on the second combat of Dargai.—The second combat of Dargai takes a place amongst the most remarkable episodes which have occurred in the chequered annals of Indian hill warfare. Rarely in the course of the many campaigns which British troops have embarked upon against irregular antagonists, have they been called upon to undertake a more awkward task than General Kempster's battalions had to cope with in traversing those few scores of yards under the converging fire of swarms of marksmen shooting down at almost point-blank range from behind excellent cover. At the same time, the true nature of the tactical problem would hardly seem to have been realised until Colonel Mathias came on the scene with his regiment. It does not appear to have been grasped that this was not so much a case of attacking a position as of forcing a pass.

The passage of a defile rather than an attack on a position.—The fatally exposed stretch where the Ghurkas and Dorsets lost so heavily was virtually a defile, and when a question arises of traversing under heavy fire a short stretch of defile—whether it be a causeway through a morass, or be a viaduct, or be a ravine—the best way of getting to the other side is to rush it in a mass. The system of gaining ground in small detachments, which works so well in a normal modern attack, is here entirely out of place. Even the Ghurkas went at the hostile position in two separate bodies, and the subsequent devoted attempts of parties of Dorsets and Derbyshires to traverse the deadly zone only meant a useless sacrifice of life ; a score of rifles

were directed on each individual, and the gallant officers and men making these spasmodic attempts were wiped out under the stream of lead. The Gordons' famous charge was undoubtedly a fine feat of arms, and it excited well-merited enthusiasm at the time ; but the truth seems to be that they conquered because they set about the job the right way instead of the wrong way. Quite apart from the moral effect which the sight of these swarms of highlanders suddenly coming at them must have exerted on the tribesmen, it was no longer a case of picking off a few individuals, but of trying to stop a mass of men. It is quite possible that if the whole of the Ghurkas at the outset had rushed forward simultaneously, with the Dorsets on their heels, the Dargai position would have been taken by storm long before noon with a loss of under 100 men. The mere fact that there should have been no less than five infantry battalions assembled at a point where attack could only be driven home on so very narrow a front, suggests a failure to fully realise the tactical situation which had arisen.

The whole difficulty was experienced in crossing the exposed ground at some little distance from the foot of the bluff. But it is interesting to speculate as to what might have happened afterwards if the defenders had been regular troops, or if they had consisted of resolute fighting men like the "Zarps" who held the koppie at Bergendal. The final climb up the steep and narrow path to the summit was unopposed by the Pathans ; but it seems open to question whether such covering musketry fire as might have been brought to bear from farther back, coupled with the shell fire from the Chagru Kotal and the Samana Suk, would have prevented determined warriors posted among the rocks and sangas at the top from making this final stage of the advance the most costly in life of all.

The action of the artillery.—Then there is the question of the support afforded by the artillery to the infantry in this remarkable affair. The rapid, concentrated fire of 24 guns for three minutes was no doubt of some assistance to the Gordons and to the troops behind them. But the Pathans had constructed their sangas so skilfully, they had arranged such effective head cover, and the rocks on the crest offered such excellent natural means of concealment and protection, that preparatory shell fire could at the best be of little use. Since the year 1897 much has been learnt as to the proper method for artillery to adopt when co-operating with infantry in attack, and it has now come to be regarded almost as a tactical axiom that if shrapnel fire is to prove of any real assistance when an assault is being pressed home, the guns must maintain their bombardment practically up to the time when the assaulting troops begin to be endangered by the shells. With the helio available, it ought to have been possible for the guns to have gone on firing at the crest of the bluff at all events until the Gordons and the troops following them were pausing on the dead ground at the foot of the cliffs, preparatory to their final climb to the top. But in making these observations it is not intended to suggest that anyone was at fault. The procedure adopted accorded with the tactical ideas of the time, and it should be borne in mind that the improvements in artillery equipment—especially in ammunition—which have been introduced of very recent years, greatly facilitate the delicate operation of dropping shells just in front of friendly troops who are advancing to the assault.

Question whether the attack, unsupported by a flanking movement, was necessary.—Few will be disposed to deny that the General in command did the right thing in insisting upon the position being taken at all costs when, at an hour

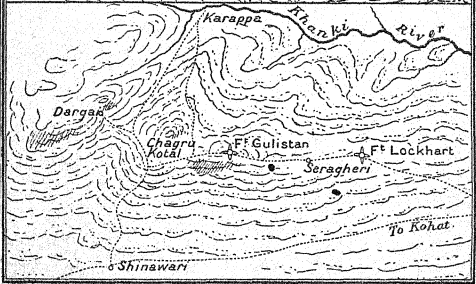
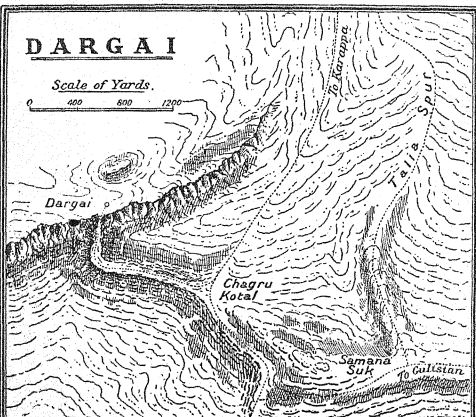
at which it had become too late to develop a turning movement, a large part of his force had been definitely brought to a standstill before it. But at one period of that October day there was at least a possibility that the head of the invading army was about to encounter a mortifying check, actually within sight of its base and of the rest of the Field Force. Operating in this kind of country a commander is apt to find himself confronted with difficulties which cannot possibly be foreseen ; but the Dargai heights had been taken two days before from the side of the Chagru Kotal, and General Kempster's brigade had been called upon to carry out a retirement in face of active opposition over exactly the same ground less than forty-eight hours before. The topographical difficulties were in fact known. Sir W. Lockhart had pointed out that the enemy would probably abandon the heights when the column got some way along the route beyond the Chagru Kotal, and General Yeatman-Biggs had so large a body of troops under his orders that a certain amount of dispersion would apparently have been permissible. It seems at least possible that, if the troops not included in General Kempster's brigade—the Derbyshires and North-amptons and 3rd Sikhs, with some artillery—supported if necessary by the rest of General Westmacott's brigade, had been detailed to operate against the Dargai position with orders to act as a containing force during the early part of the day, while General Kempster with some artillery moved on towards Karappa, very little opposition would have been encountered when it came to storming the heights in the afternoon ; in the meantime the leading portion of the 2nd Division would have been getting near the Khanki, even if it did not reach the river before nightfall.

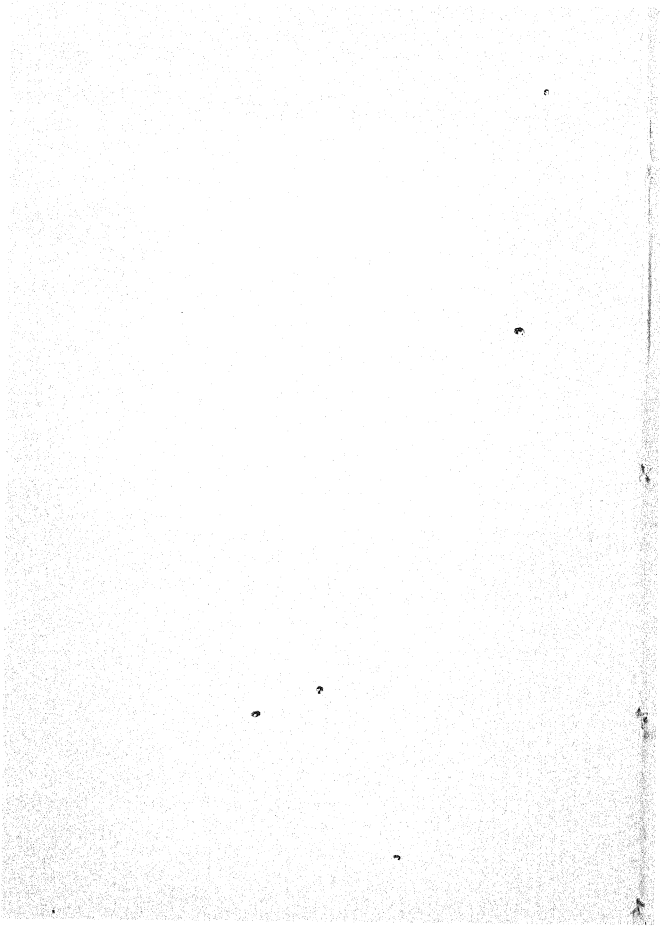
Moral effect of the victory.—On the other hand, there can be no doubt whatever that the Orakzais and Afridis,

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looking down from their fastness on the bluff, were enormously impressed by the valour of the British and Indian troops, not only when the Gordons surged up out of cover and came at them with a rush, but also when, at an earlier hour in the day, small clumps of men faced the murderous fire from the sangas again and again, and refused to admit themselves beaten. The Orakzais never again offered resolute opposition to any attack, and thenceforward, up to the time when they craved for terms soon after Sir W. Lockhart had established himself in Tirah, they confined their serious efforts to following up foraging parties and to prowling around the camps at night. Furthermore, the Samana Range was finally abandoned by the enemy from this time forward, and no difficulty worth mentioning was subsequently met with at the hands of hostile bands of any strength along the line of communications as far as the Khanki.

The advance on the 21st.—On the 21st the forward movement of the 2nd Division was continued to the Khanki Valley. General Westmacott's brigade led the way along the route from the Chagru Kotal, while the troops which had been encamped at Fort Lockhart advanced by the more easterly track down the Talia spur. Owing to Karappa being commanded at close range, and in view of the presence of large numbers of tribesmen among the hills beyond the river, the march was continued about two miles to a point opposite a village lying on the far side of the stream coming down from the Sempagha Pass. This village was occupied by the enemy; but it was hastily evacuated when a battery opened on it, and the troops encamped hard by on level ground. (This camp was called Karappa, although actually situated about two miles beyond that place.) The latter part of the route from the Chagru Kotal turned out to be very rough, and such trouble

was experienced in getting the pack animals along it that very little of the baggage got into camp that night. The column coming down the Talia spur, small as it was, encountered even greater obstacles, and its rear-guard did not reach Karappa Camp till sundown on the following evening. Fortunately the tribesmen proved themselves unenterprising during the night of the 21st, a few shells sufficing to drive off parties which showed up on the hills as evening was closing in. Therefore, although the troops suffered a good deal of discomfort, the failure to complete the march gave rise to no serious inconvenience beyond the exhaustion of the animals, which in a case like this are kept an inordinate length of time loaded up.

Delay in the concentration in the Khanki Valley. Comments.—In the end, it took up till the 27th before the two Divisions were assembled at Karappa Camp with a sufficient reserve of supplies to justify a further advance. On that day and the day previously a convoy of 3000 camels came through from Shinawari. All the week the technical troops had been constantly at work on the track, developing it into route which would meet the requirements of a link on the chain of communications connecting an army of nearly 20,000 fighting men with its base. But at first, even though the pioneers and sappers and miners speedily converted the whole of the route into a fairly good bridle path, the commissariat convoys were slow in covering the long distance over the Samana.

It will be observed that the original estimate as to the rate of forward movement, adumbrated in the orders of the 17th, had proved altogether too sanguine. The supply difficulties were undoubtedly increased by the somewhat premature concentration of the whole force at a point which was only a single day's march for combatant troops from their base; for practically the whole of the 1st

Division had reached Khangirbar by the 25th, and the advance towards the Sempagha Pass only began on the 28th. It will be noted, moreover, that the miscalculation as to time was only to a very small extent due to the action of the enemy ; the Dargai fight on the 20th in reality only involved the loss of about half a day.

The "sniping" at night.—During its prolonged halt at Karappa Camp the force was a good deal harassed with sniping at night. This grew worse and worse, culminating in a very damaging fusilade on the 25th, when the enemy showed quite exceptional enterprise. The valleys about Karappa are of some width, so that the tribesmen could fire down into them from the hills at a considerable distance off. Foraging parties had been going out daily, and these had been invariably followed up more or less determinedly by bodies of tribesmen as they fell back towards camp ; but on the 25th the foraging was undertaken on a more ambitious scale, a large party going out about four miles, protected by a considerable force. The troops concerned collected a good supply of forage and captured a number of cattle ; but when the retirement began the enemy showed up in formidable strength, lining the heights on both flanks of the valley visited and firing down at long range upon the troops. Some companies were sent out from camp to assist the force against the Pathans who were following it up homewards ; but although no great difficulty was experienced in conducting the withdrawal, the hostile musketry proved effective. The pursuit continued until the camp had been regained by the troops, and then, for the first time, sniping into the bivouacs began actually by daylight. It continued until nearly midnight, and the sum total of casualties which occurred during the retirement of the foraging force and during the subsequent firing amounted to over 30.

New system of outposts introduced.—In consequence of what occurred that night, following on the experiences of the three preceding nights, the plan was introduced of picketing the hills surrounding the camp with bodies of infantry, half a company to a whole company strong—a system which was continued till the end of the campaign. These pickets were often nearly a mile from camp, and were as a rule quite isolated; but the detachments forming them always built sangas as soon as they took up their ground, with loopholes and head cover. No instance occurred of such a post being rushed during the night, and as a rule the marauders gave them a wide berth. Later on, when it was observed that the enemy noted the position of the inlying pickets on the first night of arrival in camp and utilised the knowledge the following night, it was made a practice to shift the position of these inlying pickets nightly in the case of a standing camp. The Ghurka Scouts, moreover, hit upon the device of creeping out from the bivouacs in small parties and stalking the snipers, and their striking success in these guerilla operations, in which they took the utmost delight, had a great effect in discouraging the tribesmen from continuing their harassing nocturnal operations. Precautions were also taken by officers and men in camp in the way of erecting walls of stones and stores, and of excavating trenches, so that individuals when sitting or lying down were fairly well covered against stray bullets; but nothing effective could be done to shelter the transport animals, and it proved difficult to prevent camp followers from lighting fires and thereby drawing fire.

The effect of the enemy having modern rifles.—Although no events of a very stirring character had happened during the week that the Field Force was gathering at Karappa, the experiences undergone by the foraging parties and by

the troops in camp had made it manifest that the acquisition of modern rifles by the tribesmen was likely to exert a remarkable influence, not only over the operations of this particular campaign, but also over Indian frontier warfare in general. It is inevitable in these contests that the troops will generally be marching along the bottom of valleys, and that they will be passing the night in localities more or less commanded by high ground. In the days when the Pathans were only armed with smooth bores or rifles of obsolete make, detachments had not to be pushed far out to keep the enemy beyond range of troops on the march, or of encampments. But now all this was found to be altered. It may be added here that in these days of gun-running and of cheap fire-arms, hill warfare against savages in any part of the world is likely to prove a troublesome business for regular troops on this account. More than this. The possession of long-range rifles by regulars trained to mountaineering is likely to exert a considerable influence over any hill-fighting which may take place even in the course of struggles between disciplined armies. Only in mountain regions, where the topographical features are on a great scale, are the valleys nowadays beyond rifle range of the heights on either side.

Note on the enemy's pursuits on the 18th and 25th.—The determination with which the tribesmen followed up the foraging force on the 25th contrasted in a striking manner with the attitude they had adopted on the 18th. On the former day, although night was closing in and although the troops were retiring through awkward broken ground, the pursuers had not displayed much zeal or determination when once the Gordons and 15th Sikhs were clear of the Dargai bluff. This illustrates the tactical instinct with which these fierce banditti are endowed. On the 18th it would have been a case of their working along

a ridge, and any outflanking operations attempted by them could only have been carried out by getting below their antagonists. On the 25th it was the troops who were on the low ground; the tribesmen could move along the heights above, and could pour fire down on a force which was completely exposed to view.

CHAPTER V

THE ADVANCE INTO MAIDAN

Situation on the 27th of October.—When, on the 27th of October, Sir W. Lockhart found himself at last in a position to penetrate into Tirah, everything seemed to point to the likelihood of the enemy offering a strenuous opposition to his progress when his troops came to surmount the Sempagha Pass. Since the original advance from Shinawari on the 20th there had been no serious hostile enterprises against the stretch of the line of communications leading back over the Samana to the starting point, nor yet against the long and somewhat exposed line further back to Kohat by the route which skirted the western portion of the Orakzai country. No tribal demonstrations had been reported from the side of the Kuram Valley. General Hammond's column had seen no signs of any large Pathan gatherings about the lower end of the Bara Valley, and native reports were to the effect that few Afridis were visible about the Khyber Pass. These facts taken together seemed to suggest that the tribesmen had for the most part gathered in the central regions of their territory, ready to resist the invaders in strong force when these endeavoured to push on into Tirah. Numbers of them had, moreover, been observed to be busily engaged in fortifying the Sempagha Pass, and as this formed the gateway into Tirah from the south, and as the hostile leaders must by this time have satisfied themselves that

the main forces of their antagonists meant to force their way in by these portals, it seemed not improbable that the Afridis would loyally aid their Orakzai allies in endeavouring to bar the way at a spot where nature would afford them valuable aid.

A full week of the limited time available had already been spent in getting the two Divisions forming the mobile portion of the Field Force to Karappa Camp, and in massing sufficient supplies on the spot to justify their further advance into the enemy's country. The space of time available for operations in Tirah had thus already been reduced to a period of not much more than six weeks, and there could be no doubt that much work would remain to be done within this unknown region after the army had entered it. The route back over the Samana was now in fairly good order. It was kept under proper guard by the line of communication troops which had been detailed for the purpose by Sir Power Palmer; they were being assisted by a battalion of the 1st Brigade which had been left to hold Dargai, and by a pioneer battalion, detached from the divisional troops, for service about Karappa. Convoys were passing backwards and forwards along it without difficulty. All this was satisfactory enough. But the few days' delay which had occurred was probably already giving encouragement to the tribesmen to continue their resistance. From what was known of the Sempagha Pass there could be little doubt but that it provided the Pathans with a position capable of stout defence, the enemy were known to be engaged in perfecting their system of sangas barring the road, and there seemed to be a reasonable probability of a general action taking place which would afford the troops an opportunity of dealing the tribesmen a serious blow. Not a moment was therefore lost in continuing the advance when all was prepared, and

on the 28th the whole force moved forward three miles to Gandaki.

Minor changes in organisation.—It had already, at this early stage, been ascertained that cavalry was of very little use during active operations in this mountainous country. Any fairly level ground met with was generally terraced for cultivation purposes, so that mounted men were found to possess no real mobility, even on an ordinary foraging expedition along a valley. But such troops were sure to be of service on the line of communications, and so each of the Divisions handed over one of its two divisional squadrons to Sir Power Palmer, only two squadrons altogether accompanying the mobile force. The delay had also enabled the transport animals to be better organised and supervised, for many regiments had received their contingent of mules and ponies such a short time before the forward movement had begun, that their baggage train was naturally in some confusion. Still no amount of organisation and of administrative skill could get over the fact that a proportion of the animals were not up to their work, and it had already become evident that these must break down altogether if they were subjected to those serious strains which are at times almost inevitable when troops are in face of the enemy.

Advance to the foot of the Sempagha Pass.—The route to Gandaki lay along the bottom of the valley of the stream running down from the Sempagha Pass to the Khanki. The valley was a mile or so wide at first, but it narrowed rapidly when it approached the foot of the pass where the hills formed an amphitheatre round the head of it. Large numbers of the enemy had been observed during the previous two or three days crowning a commanding eminence which overlooked the road from the right, and two battalions

were therefore sent forward at daybreak to capture the hill; they, however, found it unoccupied. The high ground to the left was likewise taken possession of by infantry before the bulk of the force advanced. Only trifling opposition was offered to the forward movement, and some of the troops were pushed on and occupied the foot-hills on the way up to the pass, so as to enable Sir W. Lockhart to conduct a reconnaissance and to frame his plans for the morrow. It was discovered that, in addition to an elaborate system of sangas intended to bar the direct route up to the kotal, the tribesmen had extended their defences outwards towards either flank. They were seen to be especially busy on their right flank, and they evidently anticipated a turning movement from that side, the manœuvres of the infantry during the reconnaissance appearing indeed to confirm them in this view. As the reconnoitring force withdrew towards the encampment at Gandaki, the tribesmen manifested a disposition to follow it up, and some of them fired at long range into the bivouacs. During the night the pickets on the hills to the left front of the force were a good deal harassed.

The plan of attack.—That evening orders were issued for assaulting the hostile position next day. The plan was that there was to be a direct advance on the enemy's centre, covered by the guns. The three battalions of the 1st Brigade were to move off before dawn so as to cover the rest of the force at the start; one battalion was to work up a spur to the right and another to work up a spur to the left, with the object of guarding the two flanks; the third battalion was to seize a low hill directly facing the centre which was to be the first position for the covering artillery. The 2nd Brigade was then to lead the main advance, supported on its right rear by the 4th Brigade; the 3rd Brigade was to follow as a general reserve. The

batteries were to take up their position on the central hill when it had been made good by the 1st Brigade. Only water and ammunition mules were to accompany the force ; the rest of the transport was to remain at Gandaki under escort, with instructions to be ready to push on immediately that orders were signalled from the front for it to do so.

Capture of the pass.—The action, which had been anticipated eagerly by all ranks, calls for little description, for the enemy's resistance turned out to be disappointingly half-hearted and the assailants gained the day with ease. A little confusion occurred at the very outset owing to both the 2nd Brigade and some of the batteries losing their way in the labyrinth of ravines at the bottom of the main slopes, and to their taking some time before the error was repaired. But by 7 a.m. all was in order, and the enemy could already be seen evacuating his more forward positions. The accurate artillery fire contributed largely towards driving out the few tribesmen who showed any inclination to remain in the lower sangas. The infantry pushed its way up the spurs, and when it masked the guns these moved forward to a more advanced eminence.

The position would have lent itself admirably to an obstinate defence had the Pathans elected to hold it in force and with determination. Rocky eminences and jagged crests protruded at various points, each of them providing dominating ground well adapted for the hillmen to fire down on the troops from, while the boulders furnished ideal natural cover for marksmen to hide behind. But it soon became evident that the enemy ~~had~~ no intention of offering a vigorous resistance, and only at one point was a serious attempt made to check the advance and did the assailants suffer many casualties. After the kotal had been secured, it was still found necessary for the 4th Brigade, which had come up on the right of the 2nd as the line

gradually extended, to occupy some higher ground commanding it from the west. But soon after 11 a.m. the whole position was in the hands of the troops, and the defenders were in full flight down the farther side of the pass, streaming away into the Mastura Valley and firing the stacks of fodder as well as they could in their hasty retirement.

The total casualties which occurred in the Field Force in this affair amounted to only twenty-four. Nor would the enemy have appeared to have suffered any appreciable losses; but any killed and wounded in their ranks had been carried off, and it was ascertained that only one Afridi clan had furnished a contingent to assist the Orakzais in the defence. The kotal was found to be quite 2000 feet above Gandaki, an arduous ascent being involved even when the winding track was followed; the slopes of the hills at many points were very steep. Had a strong force of the hillmen withstood the attack with determination, a victory could not have been achieved without severe fighting.

Comment.—In an engagement of this kind, where a large regular force is carrying out a general attack upon a well-defined position on which irregular warriors are making a stand, it is sometimes held to be advisable to institute a turning movement, not so much with the idea of facilitating the advance of the main body as with the object of bringing fire—and if possible artillery fire—to bear on the defenders when they retreat. Antagonists of this class make off so very precipitately that troops conducting a frontal attack upon them see very little of them when once they give way. That, it will be remembered, was what happened at Dargai. But in the particular case of the storming of the Sempagha Pass, it is doubtful if a complicated operation of this kind would have had the desired effect. The rugged slopes, cut up by tortuous

ravines, hardly lent themselves to a well-timed turning movement; the enemy's resistance was very half-hearted, and the manœuvres of a detached force would probably have given rise to a certain amount of delay. The simple, straightforward method of thrusting practically the whole of the attacking troops up like a wedge into the centre of the hostile position, achieved the object satisfactorily on this occasion and very rapidly.

Advance into the upper Mastura Valley.—The 3rd Brigade, following up the 2nd, had experienced scarcely any fighting, and its leading troops were promptly sent on down the farther slopes into the Mastura Valley, which was found to have a general level of only about 800 feet below the kotal. A little later the 4th Brigade, two battalions of the 2nd Brigade, and most of the divisional troops, followed the 3rd Brigade to the locality which had been selected for encampment. Two battalions of the 2nd Brigade were left behind to hold the pass and to assist in moving the transport over it. The 1st Brigade remained for the night on the far side. Every effort was made to hurry the animals up with the great coats and blankets of the troops which were bivouacking in the Mastura Valley; but little of the transport surmounted the pass that night, although the pioneers and sappers and miners had already done much to improve the route at its worst points. The actual distance was short—only about five and a half miles from camp to camp; but within the few hours of daylight available, such a mass of animals as composed the regimental baggage train could not be expected to make good this distance over a very bad road.

The Tirah of the Orakzais.—The Mastura Valley, the Tirah of the Orakzais, proved to be even more fertile and attractive than native reports had painted it to be. The valley was particularly well watered. There was found to

be a considerable area of fairly level ground under cultivation. Great numbers of villages, consisting of solidly constructed, two-storeyed houses, were to be seen on all sides; they were generally surrounded with fruit trees, and large stacks of fodder were piled up in many of the courtyards. The district was evidently the home of an industrious and prosperous population, although for the moment the inhabitants had all withdrawn themselves into the hills with their live stock. Abundance of firewood was available, and it was at once realised that large quantities of forage could be brought into camp whenever parties were able to go out in search of it.

Difficulties with the transport.—A halt was necessary on the 30th to admit the transport closing up. By dint of great exertions on the part of transport officers, and as a result of much hard work on the part of the 1st Brigade, which afforded valuable help in getting the laden animals up the toilsome ascent to the Sempagha Kotal, practically all the regimental baggage had been passed up to the camp in the Mastura Valley by the evening of that day. It had not, however, been possible to push on much of the commissariat convoy. Still, by dint of distributing such supplies as had arrived and of foraging for grain in the villages and homesteads in the immediate vicinity of the encampment, it was found possible to issue two days' rations per man to the whole of the force in view of a fresh advance on the morrow.

Question of immediate advance into Afridi Tirah.—For Sir W. Lockhart had decided to continue his march without delay over the Arhanga Pass into Afridi Tirah; the sketch map facing page 106 shows the general lie of the country. The summit of this pass was three or four miles from the camp, and during the afternoon of the 30th the 3rd Brigade moved out in that direction so as to enable the Commander-

in-Chief to make a reconnaissance of the approaches, and to determine on his plan of attack for next day. In forming the resolution to thus continue the forward movement without a pause, Sir W. Lockhart was governed mainly by two important considerations. In the first place, there was reason to fear that if the Afridi dwellers beyond the Arhanga Pass in Maidan (which was the immediate goal of the Field Force) were given breathing time, they would (as the Orakzais had tried to do the previous day) remove their goods, fire their stores of forage, and bury their grain; supposing that they succeeded in sweeping the valley bare of supplies, this would add enormously to the difficulty of maintaining a large force for any length of time in their midst. In the second place, any procrastination on the part of the Field Force might permit the enemy to assemble large numbers of fighting men for the defence of the Arhanga Pass. Sir W. Lockhart, in his despatch recording the early operations of his army, gave this as one of his reasons for advancing at once; but it seems open to question whether a gathering of the clans to bar the way into Afridi Tirah would not have been rather desirable than otherwise, from the point of view of striking them an effective blow.

At the same time there were certain objections to such precipitate progress, to be weighed before coming to a decision. It threw a tremendous strain upon the transport animals; these had already been severely tried, even though the whole distance covered up to date had not been great. It was, moreover, not inconceivable that a forward movement over another mountain range through unknown country with only two days' food in hand, might lead to the troops being very short of supplies after their arrival in Maidan; for it was of course possible that the Afridis might have already taken steps to clear

the country of forage and grain. It was furthermore not unlikely that the retention in the Mastura Valley for some days of a large force which would be in a position to send out minor columns in all directions, might deal a speedy *coup de grâce* to such Orakzai resistance as was still to be anticipated, and that it would accelerate the arrival of their headmen in camp craving terms. But the question of supply was of paramount importance. It was a fairly safe assumption, in view of what had happened in the Mastura Valley, that the Afridis would not have taken adequate steps to devastate their country; and the food and forage which the Field Force might expect to seize in Maidan would probably more than compensate for any difficulty that might arise in pushing up commissariat stores from the base as a consequence of the rapid advance.

The forcing of the Arhanga Pass.—By dawn of the next day, therefore, the troops were already on the march for the foot of the Arhanga Pass. Although the army was about to force its way into the territory of the Zakka Khels, the most numerous and formidable of the Afridi clans, the capture of the position proved to be an even easier task than the storming of the Sempagha Pass had been two days before. The plan of attack was for the 4th Brigade to advance in the centre, with the 3rd Brigade on its left and the 2nd Brigade on its right, while the massed artillery came into action on a low hill facing the centre, which was within easy range of the kotal. The actual top of the pass was only about 1000 feet above the Mastura Valley; the slopes were not particularly steep, and they were not so much cut up with ravines as had been the case about the foot of the Sempagha Pass. Although this was the gateway into Afridi Tirah, and although some sangas had been constructed to defend it, only a limited number of tribesmen turned out to contest the passage, and these

offered scarcely any serious resistance to the assailants as they rapidly made their way upwards. The 2nd Brigade, moving forward with great spirit on the right flank, captured some commanding ground dominating the kotal, and this movement led to the hasty flight of any defenders that still remained, before the other troops could come to close quarters with them. The whole position, indeed, was in the hands of the Field Force soon after 10 a.m. The casualties suffered had been insignificant, and in his despatch Sir W. Lockhart attributed the easy victories gained here and in his attack upon the Sempagha Pass to the great moral effect of the two fights at Dargai a few days earlier.

The defenders yielded up their ground so readily and retired from the field with such precipitation, that no tactical disposition of the attacking army could have enabled this to inflict effective punishment on the enemy. Nevertheless, as such feeble resistance on the part of the tribesmen could not be foretold with certainty, and as the advance of the 2nd Brigade was practically a turning movement, it seems open to question whether the arrangements of massing the whole six batteries in the centre was the best that could be devised. Had the defence proved a little more resolute, a battery accompanying the infantry on the right flank on to the heights to the right of the kotal, might have proved extremely useful in firing on the fugitives as the attack was pushed home.

Advance into Maidan.—The troops lost no time after their easily won triumph in pushing down into the Maidan Valley, a few of the enemy being observed some distance ahead, hastily retiring before them. It was a descent of only about 900 feet, but the track was found to be very bad; it followed the bed of a dried-up torrent, it dropped down some steep gradients, and it was much

obstructed by rocks and stones. A good camping-ground was selected at a distance of about six miles from the Mastura bivouacs, orders were sent back for the baggage to follow, and in the meantime General Hart brought forward his brigade to Mastura camp, where it was to remain so as to dominate Orakzai Tirah and to guard the communications from the Sempagha Pass onwards.

Difficulties with the transport on the Arhanga Pass.—Great efforts were made by all concerned to get up the most necessary regimental transport, and a certain amount of the baggage train sent on from Mastura that day arrived in the Maidan camp before dark. But the Arhanga Pass was still choked with beasts of burden when evening closed in. The sappers and miners had been hard at work all the afternoon endeavouring to improve the track. The passing of animals and troops had, however, greatly impeded them in their labours, and the route was still very difficult on the Maidan side of the kotal at the end of the day. The consequence was that the transport naturally moved very slowly after nightfall, and that there were many conspicuous gaps in the column.

Night attacks upon the transport while on the move.—The Zakka Khels took speedy advantage of this. A party of these marauders delivered a sudden attack upon the animals of the 3rd Sikhs, and although the regimental baggage guard managed to beat off the attempts that were made to seize the ammunition mules, about two hundred kits were carried off and the tribesmen could claim to have gained an unmistakable success.

That strings of baggage animals should be wandering after dark along a route not properly picketed was excusable enough on this particular night. But unfortunately the same thing occurred again about 7 p.m. on the very next night, and almost at the same spot. On

this occasion the freebooters were in greater force, their appetite for loot having evidently been whetted by the exploit of the previous evening. Over 100,000 rounds of ammunition, some rifles and about 350 kits were secured by the enemy on this occasion, and the baggage guard of the Queen's, which was heavily beset for a time, suffered seven casualties. Some 70 ponies, moreover, stampeded and were lost. That so much transport should have been allowed to stream over the pass after the experience undergone on the previous night showed mismanagement somewhere, and these two nocturnal episodes could only be described as untoward from every point of view. They had a bad moral effect; and they encouraged the Zakka Khels, who are amongst the most hardened and dexterous marauders on the Indian frontier, to persist in their harassing enterprises. Love of plunder had been at the root of the Afridi activities in the Khyber which had originally brought on the campaign, and the comparatively easy capture of spoil so highly prized as rifles and ammunition, no doubt helped to determine the Zakka Khels in continuing a guerilla warfare against the Field Force.

Maidan. Plenty of supplies found.—Maidan proved to be to the full as fertile and as well watered as the boasts of its owners had led the Intelligence Department to expect. The whole valley, which was found to cover a large area, was terraced for cultivation, and it displayed vast numbers of habitations in all directions. Numerous groves and coppices offered an ample supply of firewood. There were scarcely any collections of houses which could be called villages, the dwellings being generally large, detached, two-storeyed homesteads with fortified blockhouses annexed to them, and accommodating a single family. The hills bordering the level country were in many places

fairly well wooded. The whole valley was found to be stocked with grain, fodder and fruit, the Afridis having only removed their live stock although they had buried a good deal of their grain. That there should be so much sustenance for man and beast was a matter of much gratification to Sir W. Lockhart, as it tended to diminish the amount of commissariat stores which would have to be brought up from the base to subsist the army. The fact of vast quantities of the supplies which formed the wealth of the hostile tribesmen falling into the hands of the troops, was, moreover, likely to exercise a greater moral effect than if these hoards had simply been destroyed by their owners before the Field Force penetrated into Afridi Tirah.

CHAPTER VI

THE OPERATIONS BASED ON THE MAIDAN CAMP

The general situation on reaching Maidan.—The Field Force could now claim that it had performed what may be called the determinate portion of its allotted task. It had penetrated into the remote region which constituted the summer home of the Afridis and the Orakzais, and it had demonstrated to the two tribes which had so wantonly defied the Government, that those inmost fastnesses of theirs, which they had boasted no invader could enter, were at the mercy of the Indian Empire when it elected to put forth its strength. The troops had, moreover, on their way inflicted a dramatic defeat upon a swarm of tribesmen ensconced in a natural stronghold on the Samana Range, and they had once and again within the space of forty-eight hours hunted the defenders in ignominious flight out of strong positions which had been diligently prepared for resistance. But much still obviously remained to be done, and the near approach of the cold weather left little leisure to consummate necessary undertakings which had not yet even been planned out.

The geographical features of Maidan.—It will be convenient at this point to describe very briefly the main geographical features of the Maidan Valley and of the hill country immediately surrounding this patch of open, level country in the heart of the mountains.¹ Maidan is

¹ The sketch map facing page 106 illustrates the events recorded in this chapter. Maidan is in reality a district in which Bagh is included; but for convenience the first camp occupied was always known as Maidan Camp, the second as Bagh Camp.

drained by a stream which flows out of it northwards through what is known as the Dwatoi defile, and which, immediately beyond this, joins the Rajgal River, a stream flowing from west to east; the two streams together form the Bara, flowing eastwards. There are hills all round Maidan, the valley closing in at its lower end near Bagh which lies a mile or so above the head of the Dwatoi defile. Bagh itself, situated about three miles from where the Field Force had encamped, did not prove to be a locality of importance, except for the fact that it was regarded as sacred and that it boasted a dilapidated mosque; the great tribal gatherings of the Afridis were held there, and the place had been the scene of the meeting of the Orakzai and Afridi headmen when they decided upon war. To the south of Maidan lies the upper Mastura Valley. To the east is situated the Waran Valley, which is drained by a stream that runs roughly eastwards and joins the Mastura; the Waran Valley is Afridi country, although the upper Mastura Valley is Orakzai territory. To the north and north-east, Maidan is overlooked by high hills which form a barrier between it and the Bara and the Rajgal Valleys; this range is only cleft at the one point of the Dwatoi defile. To the west are minor valleys, which descend from the lofty watershed separating the Maidan streams from those draining westwards into the Karmana defile which leads into the Kuram Valley. To the south-west rise hills which shut off the head-waters of the Khanki.

Difficulties in the way of immediate activity.—It was the intention of Sir W. Lockhart that portions of his army should visit every one of the principal valleys included in Tirah, so that as far as possible every clan and every tribal subdivision should have experienced the effects of having Anglo-Indian troops in its midst. But it was

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foreseen that detached expeditions of this kind were not unlikely to meet with serious opposition and that they might easily draw the clansmen from adjacent valleys down upon them; and it was realised that it would not on that account be judicious to detail insignificant forces to carry out independent undertakings of this character. The consequence was that, seeing that a whole brigade was already detached to occupy the Mastura Valley and to help to keep open the communications between Maidan Camp and Shinawari, only a single independent expedition could safely be sent out at one time, and as several distinct tasks had to be performed it was obvious that there would be little time to spare. In so far as the Orakzais were concerned, their clans were now giving far less cause for anxiety than the Afridis in general. The southerly tribe was already showing symptoms of a desire to submit; moreover, as most of its valleys were comparatively speaking low-lying as compared to Afridi Tirah, any further punitive measures that might still prove necessary could, at the worst, be carried out at a time of the year when the cold had rendered operations in the uplands around Maidan virtually impracticable.

The intention to transfer the base to the Peshawar Valley.—It had already been decided that the base of the Field Force should ultimately be transferred from Shinawari and Kohat to the Peshawar Valley, and that the troops in Tirah should join hands with General Hammond's column which was watching the mouth of the Bara Valley. But in the immediate present the point of paramount importance was to collect sufficient supplies in Maidan to admit of the army remaining there while it carried out punitive measures in its vicinity. For the moment a large proportion of the baggage animals were required to supplement the regular line of communications transport engaged

in bringing up commissariat and other stores to the front. Still, the troops could make their presence felt in the meantime in various directions, provided that this did not involve detaching a force that was fully equipped with animals.

Organisation of the line of communications and of supply.—It was arranged that the line of communications under Sir Power Palmer should be considered to run up to the Sempagha Kotal, but that the stretch across the Mastura Valley should be under General Hart's charge. Divisional transport was mainly used at the outset to bring supplies over the Arhanga Pass from Mastura Post, while line of communications transport, consisting largely of camels, conveyed the stores from Shinawari to the Mastura Valley. This division of duties worked well, and after two or three days it was found that two days' supplies were reaching the front in twenty-four hours. Thus an adequate reserve was accumulated fairly rapidly, and as time went on the improvement of the road eased the strain and the line of communications transport was able to come all the way to Maidan.

The Afridis grow aggressive.—The troops in Maidan and in the Mastura Valley did not remain entirely idle during the early days of November, while the accumulation of stores was engaging so much attention. Foraging was carried out methodically in both localities, and at first without incurring much opposition. During the first three or four days of the month, those of the Afridis whose dwellings were in Maidan had their hands full in removing their families, their live stock and whatever they could carry away with them, over the hills in a northerly direction. The Bara Valley and the Bazar Valley beyond it were of course at this time open to them, and spies informed the Intelligence Department that the tracks leading to those havens

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of temporary refuge were thronged with non-combatants and flocks abandoning the highlands into which the Field Force had thrust itself. But the tribesmen soon grew aggressive again. The telegraph wire began to be cut almost nightly, a convoy was attacked on the 5th on its way up to the Arhanga Pass, and the firing into camp in the dark, which had almost ceased since the advance from Gandaki, was resumed by the enemy to some extent. Moreover, as the foraging parties went farther afield from the Maidan Camp, they began to be fired upon daily, and they were sometimes followed up aggressively as they made their way home with their spoils. Indeed, before a full week had been spent in Afridi Tirah, it had already become evident that a proportion of the clans had no intention whatever of submitting so early.

Negotiations.—The Orakzais, on the other hand, were already sending in their *jirgahs*¹ to treat, in response to a message which had been sent out summoning them to present themselves at the camp of the Field Force.

Four of the Afridi clans also sent in their *jirgahs*; but the Kuki Khels of Rajgal, the Sipan Khels of the Bara Valley, the Zakka Khels and the Aka Khels (these latter are a not very formidable clan, living in Waran) had not complied with the summons; the two last had indeed returned defiant answers. The plan had hitherto been adopted of only demolishing towers and burning dwellings

¹ In the Pathan country the central authority, such as it is, in a clan is vested in a council of the headmen. This council is called a *jirgah*. The headmen, or *maliks*, control military operations up to a certain extent; but they naturally are drawn from the older men in the clan. It is the young men who are generally unwilling to give in, as they delight in the guerilla warfare which usually ensues after an expeditionary force has overcome the original opposition to its entry into the clan's territory. The fact of a *jirgah* presenting itself for purposes of negotiation does not thus necessarily indicate that fighting will not continue.

when the troops were actually fired upon from them. By adopting this procedure it was hoped not to inflame the resentment of waverers ; but it also had the advantage that it left an easy means of chastising clans, or sub-sections of clans, should they not in due course send in their submission. After the events of the opening days in Maidan, however, it was decided to destroy the Zakka Khel homesteads freely, so as to teach that truculent and treacherous section of the Afridis that the troops were capable of putting more effective punitive measures in force than the mere carrying off of fodder and grain.

The delay in initiating active operations.—The ease with which the army had made its way into the heart of Tirah had perhaps engendered an undue optimism at Headquarters. More energy and enterprise might perhaps have been displayed during the first few days spent in the Afridi country in the direction of sending out expeditions. It is true that the Field Force was, in a sense, demobilised during the opening week, owing to so much of its transport being detached for line of communications work ; but troops could have been sent out on tasks that could be completed between dawn and dusk and which required no impedimenta to accompany the force. The essence of prosecuting hostilities effectively against antagonists such as the Pathans are, seems to lie in granting them no leisure after receiving a blow. Any delay on the part of the troops after achieving a victory is interpreted by such adversaries as a sign of indecision if not of fear, and if left unmolested they are prone to recover their courage with a most disconcerting facility. The appearance of Sir W. Lockhart's army in Afridi Tirah, and especially in that portion of it which is the home of the fierce Zakka Khels, was in itself a most damaging blow to the tribesmen, and its moral effect for the moment must have been very

great. But the impression no doubt wore off apace when nothing of importance followed for more than a week, and so the Pathans began to forget their early dejection. It is true that the *jirgahs* had been summoned; but that circumstance did not forbid chastisement from being meted out in the meantime, nor did it render necessary a period of virtual inaction where such lawless banditti as the dwellers in Maidan were concerned. Time in fact was possibly lost at a juncture when time was very valuable. However, on the 8th the Commander-in-Chief made arrangements for an operation of some importance to take place on the following day.

The reconnaissance to Saran Sar.—It was known that most of the Zakka Khels had removed their families northwards by a track leading over the hills situated to the north-east of the camp. The point where this surmounted the range was called Saran Sar; vide the map facing page 106. The object of the expedition was to permit of this spot being visited for survey purposes, and with the object of observing the country beyond; a number of homesteads farther back belonging to the clan were in the meantime to be destroyed under cover of the troops thus pushed out. To carry out the reconnaissance, General Westmacott was given a mixed brigade consisting of the Dorsets, Northampton's, 15th Sikhs and 36th Sikhs, with two batteries and a company of sappers and miners.¹

The Saran Sar kotal has an elevation of about 2000 feet above the general level of Maidan, and it is approached by a valley running up into the hills; this valley at its lower end merges into a nullah which runs nearly all the way to where the camp was. The force moved out soon after 7 a.m., and as a preliminary the artillery was posted on

¹ An account of this affair is given in *Small Wars: their Principles and Practice*, with a sketch map.

a hill at the lower end of the valley up which the infantry were to work, the 15th Sikhs remaining with it. Then the Dorsets were pushed up the spur on the left, the Northamptons advanced in the centre, and the 36th Sikhs moved forward on the right. The infantry met with some opposition which caused a slight check, and further delay was caused by the Dorsets getting too far away to the flank and losing touch with the Northamptons. But by 11 a.m., four hours after marching off, the crest had been occupied. A gap, however, remained in the left centre between the Northamptons and Dorsets, and it happened that there was here a wooded spur affording effective cover. A good view was obtained over the country on the far side in the direction of the Bara Valley, and the survey parties promptly set to work. The ashes of fires and the quantities of goods and chattels that were lying about, made it plain that the tribesmen frequented this route; and as some of them could be heard calling to each other in the adjacent woods there could be little doubt that appreciable numbers of them were at hand, ready to follow up the force when it fell back.

The delay on the heights.—The survey work was soon completed, and a little after noon General Westmacott was about to commence his retirement, when a message came up from Sir W. Lockhart, who had accompanied the force but had remained behind lower down, that he wished to visit the top himself. A delay of two hours occurred in consequence of this, and the actual retreat did not begin till 2 p.m., only allowing about three and a half hours to get clear of some very awkward and intricate ground so as to arrive in camp before dusk, although the almost unopposed advance had taken fully all that time.

The retirement.—At first the Zakka Khels[†] made no sign. General Westmacott sent off the 36th Sikhs to go

part of the way down, followed by three companies of the Northhamptons; the Dorsets retired simultaneously on the flank. But when the rearmost Northampton companies moved off, the last of them was suddenly fired into from the woods on the flank, a number of men were hit, and serious difficulty at once arose in getting the wounded away. Colonel Haughton, commanding the 36th, was thereupon ordered to take his regiment back up the hill, and his Sikhs successfully covered the withdrawal of the Northhamptons to near the foot of the steeper ground. Considerable delay had, however, occurred in spite of General Westmacott's skilful dispositions, and evening was already closing in while the troops were still in very broken ground. The artillery and 15th Sikhs were sent off to camp, the wounded were started well on their way, and then the force continued its retirement, the enemy in the meantime swarming down the ravines in ever-increasing numbers.

The Northhamptons in difficulties in the dark.—In the growing darkness the three regiments had to retire more or less independently, and unluckily the Northhamptons, who were in the centre, took the line of the already-mentioned nullah. This nullah followed a somewhat tortuous course, its sides were steep, there were branch nullahs running into it on either hand, and the Afridis took full advantage of the configuration of the terrain. The tail of the regiment was attacked with great determination, the troops being fired down upon from the sides of the nullah; and the casualties soon reduced nearly all the men who happened to be on the spot to the positions of guards and carriers for the wounded. Finally, an officer and ten men were somehow cut off and were all killed. Some assistance was afforded by the Dorsets and Sikhs; but in the darkness the serious straits of a fraction of the force was not realised by the remainder, and it was only when the last troops

had found their way into camp about 7.30 p.m. that the extent of the losses became known. Altogether the day's casualties amounted to nearly 70, the Northhamptons having had 19 killed and 30 wounded. These figures, of course, represent nothing serious for a brigade at the end of a day's fighting; but unluckily the circumstances were such that the enemy was able to perceive that the troops had not had the best of the encounter.

Comments.—The first serious undertaking since the Field Force had entered Afridi Tirah, although it had started most satisfactorily, wound up in fact with something very like a minor disaster. Under cover of the reconnaissance a number of Zakka Khel habitations had been destroyed; but the fact remained that the hillmen had not only had the satisfaction of slaughtering a number of soldiers and of wreaking vengeance on them in their barbarous fashion, but they had also possessed themselves of a number of magazine rifles and of some ammunition. The regrettable termination to the day's operations can no doubt be to some extent attributed to the mistake made by the Northhamptons in retreating in the dusk along the treacherous nullah; but it was a very natural mistake for a battalion to make which was unpractised in hill warfare, and which had taken the field without receiving any instructions as to the tactical methods which ought to be employed in operations of this peculiar kind. There was no General Staff in those days either in India or in this country, and under the system existing at the time, the training of troops, whether for civilised or for uncivilised warfare, was regarded by the staff in general as a matter of secondary importance as compared with the solution of the problems that are perpetually arising in the course of administrative routine. At the same time, it is difficult to escape from the impression that not half the

casualties would have occurred, and that no rifles or ammunition would have fallen into the enemy's hands, if the retirement had begun at noon as General Westmacott had intended. Had sufficient time been allowed, the guns would have been in action ready to check the zeal of the Zakka Khels in pursuit, the commander of the force could have maintained control over his units to the end, and he would probably have seen to it that the Northhamptons avoided the nullah. Moreover, even supposing that that regiment followed the nullah, officers and men would have seen what they were doing, the troops on either flank could have gone to their assistance, and these would certainly have interfered with the pursuers when they were devising the murderous ambushes which proved so fatal at the close of the day's combat.

Second expedition to Saran Sar.—After what had occurred it was necessary to repeat the expedition to Saran Sar, and so General Gaselee's brigade with two batteries moved out on the 11th, the Ghurka Scouts being in attendance. This time the retirement began at a proper hour, and it was carried out practically without incurring loss. By employing the device of a precipitate retirement, the Ghurka Scouts managed, indeed, to draw the enemy under so effective a fire from other troops drawn up for the purpose, that the hillmen undoubtedly had much the worst of the transaction. Even so, the retirement took four and a half hours to complete, which shows how imperative it is that in operations of this kind the withdrawal shall begin betimes so as to avoid risk of being benighted. A number of the Zakka Khel homesteads were destroyed by General Kempster's brigade on this occasion, under cover of General Gaselee's reconnaissance.

The Orakzai headmen informed of the Government's terms.—That same day the *jirgahs* of certain Orakzai

clans which had been holding back arrived in camp, and on the 12th the Government's demands were communicated to the representatives of the tribe in Durbar. They were given fourteen days to comply. The headmen of most of the Afridi clans except the Zakka Khels and Aka Khels were also anxious to learn what was to be exacted from them, but Sir W. Lockhart refused to inform them of the terms, insisting on the presence of the representatives of all the various divisions of the tribe. As it happened, a foraging expedition sent out by General Hart in the Mastura Valley was determinedly attacked the very next day after the Orakzai leaders had been apprised of the conditions, and a battery had to be added to his force in consequence from Maidan; the affair, however, seems to have been to some extent due to a misunderstanding, as the villagers had deluded themselves into the idea that foraging would cease now that negotiations had definitely commenced.

General Kempster's expedition to Waran.—On the 13th, a fortnight after entering the Maidan Valley, Sir W. Lockhart embarked for the first time on an undertaking which involved the absence of an expeditionary force from the main camp for more than a few hours. The Aka Khels of Waran had been manifesting symptoms of a desire for an accommodation. There seemed to be some likelihood that the appearance of a large body of troops in their midst would accelerate the attendance of their *jirgahs* in Maidan. It was, in any case, necessary that this district (which was quite unknown) should be explored, and that a rough survey of it should be executed. So arrangements were made on the 12th for General Kempster to cross the intervening hills on the following morning, and then to remain for a couple of days in the valley.

The troops detailed were General Kempster's own

brigade, supplemented by the 36th Sikhs, two batteries, and two companies of sappers and miners. The route led through Zakka Khel territory over the Tseri Pass which crosses the hills at no great elevation. No resistance was offered to the advance ; but, even so, although the whole distance to the point selected for encampment only came to eight miles, the rear-guard did not reach its destination until after 9 p.m. The ground was most intricate on the Waran side of the kotal, and the track which the large number of pack animals necessarily accompanying the force had to traverse, was very rough. On the following day foraging was carried out on an extensive scale, and the residence of a Mullah, who had done much to foment the rising of the Afridis, was destroyed ; no appreciable opposition was encountered during these operations. On the 15th a reconnaissance was sent to the point where the Waran and Mastura Valleys meet ; on this day the tribesmen showed symptoms of hostility at an early hour, and when the force began to retire towards camp they followed it up in considerable numbers. There was firing, moreover, into camp that night, and it transpired that a number of Zakka Khels had come down into the valley and were endeavouring to stir the Aka Khels up to fight ; the habitations of these latter had been purposely spared in recognition of their exemplary attitude since their territory had been invaded.

The skilful design for the retirement.—It had been arranged that General Kempster's force was to return to Maidan on the 16th. This only involved its moving eight miles, and the track had been much improved since the advance march of three days earlier ; but the march partook of the nature of a retirement, it passed through Zakka Khel country, and the Zakka Khels were undoubtedly on the warpath and meditating mischief. The

Aka Khels might, or might not, join in the pursuit ; but whether they did or did not, everything pointed to the rear-guard having a heavy responsibility thrown upon it during the day's operations. Elaborate arrangements were therefore made in anticipation of a strenuous hostile pursuit. The transport was to be escorted by the main body. The 36th Sikhs were sent on to hold the Tseri kotal, which was about half way. It was arranged that the 15th Sikhs when they came up should replace the 36th, who were then to move nearer to Maidan and to take up another position. The original rear-guard was to pass through the two Sikh regiments and to join the main body, which would include throughout the bulk of the Dorsets and of the Gordons, and one battery. An early start was ordered, and the main body and transport were well clear of camp by 9 a.m.

The rear-guard seriously delayed.—The rear-guard was under command of Colonel Travers of the 2nd Ghurkas, who had under his orders his own regiment, a company each from the Gordons and Dorsets coming in from out-posts, a battery, and the Ghurka Scouts. As it turned out, the main body and baggage had no trouble to speak of at any time of the day ; indeed, the transport was clear of the kotal by noon and arrived in camp by 3 p.m. But the rear-guard was constantly engaged from the moment of first drawing in its pickets, and as the hours passed it came to be pressed more and more determinedly. Fighting continued all the way to the kotal, where Colonel Travers's troops arrived in a somewhat exhausted state about 3 p.m. They had thus taken six hours to cover about four miles, and there now remained barely three hours for the new rear-guard to get into camp before dark. Colonel Travers's tired troops moved through the pickets of the 15th Sikhs that were guarding the pass, and they joined the main

body farther on; Colonel Abbott of the 15th became rear-guard commander.

Grave situation in the afternoon.—Sangas had been constructed on the kotal, and the high ground on the flanks was picketed. But the enemy was now in strong force; the Aka Khels could no longer resist the spectacle of the infidels in retreat from their country, and they were aiding the Zakka Khels freely in their obstinate demonstrations against the tail of General Kempster's column. The pursuers, moreover, showed more daring and enterprise on this occasion than they had at the outset displayed when General Westmacott's troops were withdrawing from the Saran Sar heights. As the 15th Sikhs began to draw in their pickets, the tribesmen pressed forward to close range and several of the men were wounded. Owing to some misunderstanding, a supporting battery was not in action as had been intended, ammunition was running short, and finally the enemy got so near to the rearmost company holding a sanga on the kotal that the problem of getting the wounded away became a very awkward one. Colonel Abbott thereupon apprised General Kempster by signal of the difficulties the rear-guard were in.

The fight on the Tseri Kotal.—Five companies of the 36th Sikhs and two of the Dorsets were ordered back to help the 15th; but Colonel Haughton was already bringing back part of his regiment, and the sanga was evacuated just as this support was coming up. Then, of a sudden, crowds of Afridi swordsmen rushed down upon the company as it cleared the sanga; but its fire, and that of another which hastened back to support it, brought this audacious tribal effort to an abrupt conclusion. Numbers of the enemy were laid low, and one result of their timidity was that Colonel Haughton, who had assumed command in place of Colonel Abbott (wounded), was able to withdraw

his troops without much more trouble for some distance. The main body of the column was by this time moving on into camp as darkness was rapidly coming on, so that Colonel Haughton now found himself faced with the prospect of a three miles' night march through intricate country, with a force of ten very weak companies belonging to three different regiments, encumbered with wounded, and with no support of any kind except a company of the Dorsets (one of the two sent back) which had been detached and was posted in a house on the way to Maidan. The enemy all the time were working forward on his flanks, and a galling fire was suddenly opened from some houses which had been burnt earlier in the day.

Colonel Haughton's assumption of the offensive retrieves the situation.—Difficulties were gathering thick. It had grown so dark that it was impossible to distinguish objects clearly that were many yards away. The tribesmen were approaching on all sides. The situation had become full of peril and anxiety. Colonel Haughton, however, proved fully equal to the situation. Snatching the moment, he gave the order to fix bayonets and to rush the buildings, and the troops responded manfully to his call. One party of Sikhs with a few Dorsets, under Haughton himself, charged straight at the smouldering hamlet, bayoneted one or two of the enemy who were not fleet enough of foot to make good their escape, and had soon established themselves under fair cover for the night. Another party made a dash for a house about a quarter of a mile from the hamlet, seized it likewise, and had speedily placed it in a fair state of defence. The effect of this counterstroke was decisive in so far as the safety of the bulk of the rear-guard was concerned, for this maintained its position all night, suffering more from cold and hunger than from anything else.

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The contretemps to a detachment of Dorsets.—But, unfortunately, the company of Dorsets which was posted in the before-mentioned house abandoned its place of refuge, apparently owing to a misunderstanding, and this small detachment suffered very heavily on its way back to the Maidan Camp. It would seem that men were heard passing in the nullah below the house, and that these were mistaken for Sikhs when they in reality were marauders. Different parties of the company got separated from each other in the darkness and were attacked by the Afridis who were swarming on all sides by this time, and it is perhaps remarkable that so large a number of wounded and unwounded survivors managed eventually to struggle into camp. Apart from this contretemps, the rear-guard fared well considering the dangerous situation it had found itself in when the light failed, and next morning, when General Gaselee went out with his brigade to help it, it was already on the move and was coming in independently with its wounded. The total casualties during the retreat from Waran amounted to 72.

Comments.—It had been an unfortunate epilogue to an expedition which up to a certain point had been most successful. In some respects the withdrawal had been carried out most skilfully, and the fact that all the baggage had covered the eight miles in ample time without causing delay was a matter for congratulation. But the obstinate determination with which the enemy followed up Colonel Travers's rear-guard as far as the kotal had made it practically certain by 3 p.m., when only half the total distance had been covered, that there would be no relaxation of the pursuit now that darkness was approaching; the affair of Saran Sar a few days earlier had provided a precedent in this respect. The desire to see the whole force safely assembled within the perimeter of the pickets

encircling Maidan Camp was a very natural one, and the situation was one of undoubted difficulty. It is, moreover, always easy to be wise after the event. But what occurred in the late afternoon and after night closed in, suggests that the proper course to have adopted at 3 p.m. would have been to then make arrangements to hold the pass for the night with the two Sikh regiments. This would have allowed the two battalions the necessary time to make themselves secure. The main body might then have gone on into camp, and there would have been no difficulty in withdrawing the Sikhs next morning under cover of a couple of battalions and a battery sent out from camp.

It had, however, been intended to begin moving the main camp from Maidan to Bagh on the 17th, and General Kempster may have been afraid that a delay in the return of part of his force would have upset the Commander-in-Chief's plans. Nor does it seem to have been realised at Headquarters that the Waran column was being asked to do a big thing in covering eight miles through bad country with a lengthy baggage column, bearing in mind that the movement must appear to the enemy to be one of retreat. Had the relations between distance and time been more correctly appreciated at Headquarters, a couple of battalions would probably have been sent out early in the day from Maidan Camp with the equipment needed for a night in the open, to hold the Tseri Pass; the troops from Waran would then have passed through these, and next morning the two battalions could have been helped into camp. That a serious disaster did not occur was due to Colonel Haughton's genius for command, to his happy assumption of the offensive at the critical moment, and to his prompt determination to remain where he was when he had secured a fairly good position.

The danger of moving in the dark not realised by

officers in general of any rank.—The untoward evacuation of the house, where they would probably have been perfectly safe for the night, by the Dorsets, was one of those accidents which are bound to occur from time to time in war. The accounts furnished by the survivors as to what occurred were somewhat conflicting, the two young officers present both having been killed. But events which marked the first half of the Tirah campaign prove that the generality of officers of all ranks had not grasped the risks which attend moving in the dark in this kind of country in the presence of such antagonists. Two subalterns may possibly have blundered to some extent, but if so they paid for the mistake with their lives, for a mistake no worse than that which had been committed when transport was straying along over the Arhanga Pass in the dark for two nights in succession protected only by weary baggage guards, no worse than that which had been committed when General Westmacott's force was delayed from noon till 2 p.m. on the heights of Saran Sar, no worse than that which had been committed when no assistance was sent out from Maidan Camp to help General Kempster's force in, no worse than that which had been committed some three or four hours before, when the rearmost troops were withdrawn from the kotal at an hour when they could not possibly be expected to reach camp before dark.

Colonel Haughton's mixed force had behaved splendidly under his inspiring leadership; but it had suffered intensely from the cold which had naturally proved especially trying to the wounded. Besides having little or nothing to eat, the men had no great-coats. Now very much the same sort of thing had happened on the night after the second combat of Dargai, and it was to happen a good many more times before the Field Force withdrew from Tirah. The

fact that the troops were not properly equipped to meet the exigencies of active service, had possibly something to do with that eagerness which always displayed itself on the part of all ranks to get somehow into camp at night. The truth is that in a region where the coldest night is so intense as it was in Tirah in November and December, troops have no business to be on the war-path without some warm clothing carried on their persons ready to be assumed at the end of the day's work. Troops, furthermore, have no business to be on the war-path in any climate without some form of emergency ration at their disposal.

The day's fighting amounted to a success for the Afridis.—As in the case of Saran Sar, the losses in this Tseri affair had not really been severe. But the Afridis had again made themselves masters of a few rifles and some ammunition, and had again destroyed a small detachment at close quarters. Moreover, the Aka Khels, who had been wavering and who had received no chastisement beyond losing some of their grain and forage, had ended by taking a prominent part in the harrying of General Kempster's rear-guard. Taken as a whole, the tribesmen could fairly boast that they had not had the worst of the encounter, in spite of the severe chastisement which their swordsmen had received when they swooped down on the 15th Sikhs.

Hostility of tribesmen about Bagh.—A foraging expedition had been undertaken from the camp at Maidan to Bagh on the 16th. Bagh lies in the territory of the Malikdin Khels, and it adjoins that of the Khamber Khels, both of them clans which had sent in their *jirgahs* and which had, moreover, made propositions as to trading with the Field Force. But in spite of their friendly overtures the tribesmen had shown up in some strength when the force reached the place, and they had followed the troops up persistently on their way back to camp. Thus, at the

end of a fortnight spent by the army in the summer home of the Afridis, the portents all indicated that much work remained to be done before the enemy could be deemed to be crushed.

Plans for the future.—Sir W. Lockhart had, however, decided to move on the bulk of his force to Bagh. It was daily getting colder, and only about three more weeks could be calculated upon before the approach of the winter snows would inevitably drive the army out of Tirah. Before quitting the uplands, an expedition must visit the Rajgal Valley which was occupied by the Kuki Khels, and it was also imperative that troops should march through the western Orakzai valleys and should settle accounts with the Chamkanis. The line, or lines, to be followed when Tirah was evacuated had also still to be finally decided upon. It would be possible to move by the Waran Valley or the Mastura Valley—the two routes met within a long day's march; but if the whole army were to retire by that line of operations, the Bara Valley would not be touched in its upper part. It had therefore already been determined that only a portion of the Field Force should gain the Peshawar Valley by the southerly route.

A choice of two lines seemed to present itself for those portions of the army which were eventually to move down the Bara Valley. There was the much-frequented track over the Saran Sar kotal which offered the more direct route and which, passing all the way through Zakka Khel country, must strike the river about 25 miles above the opening out of its valley. But a movement by this route involved the surmounting of a commanding range of hills with all the baggage that must accompany the force, followed by a march through extremely broken and entirely unknown country on the far side, where there might be difficulty

as to water. The other route followed the stream which drained Maidan and joined the Bara. It meant passing through the Dwatoi defile, which was reported to be narrow and very difficult ; but although it meant the longer way it traversed the whole of the Bara Valley, it passed close to the Kuki Khel country which had to be visited in any case, there could be no difficulty about water, and it had almost been decided that this was to be the line chosen. The move to Bagh would bring the main encampment nearer to the Dwatoi defile and Rajgal Valley, and it would also place the Field Force in a more convenient locality for detaching an expeditionary column westwards.

CHAPTER VII

THE OPERATIONS BASED ON BAGH

The move to Bagh.—The transfer of the main body of the Field Force to its new encampment commenced on the 18th of November. On that day General Symonds moved with his Division (all except that part of it which was in the Mastura Valley) from Maidan camp to Bagh. The tribesmen offered little opposition at first; but when they perceived that this was not going to be merely a foraging expedition, but that the troops had come to stay, swarms of the enemy gathered in the numerous houses in the vicinity of the camping-ground and occupied some eminences which to a certain extent commanded it. The musketry which was poured in from these coigns of vantage proved so troublesome that detachments had to be sent out by General Symonds in several directions to expel the marksmen from the positions which they had occupied. This task was not achieved without some difficulty and loss, and there were 27 casualties during the day. That the Afridis should have displayed such an aggressive spirit during this day's engagement showed that the principal tribe of Tirah was still very far off from yielding.

Part of the 2nd Division moved to the new camp next day, and all spare animals were employed in transferring the reserve of commissariat stores which had been accumulated, from Maidan to Bagh. These stores were estimated to weigh 80,000 lbs., or 5000 mule loads; but the work was completed on the 20th. On the 21st the re-

mainder of the 2nd Division moved to Bagh, and Maidan Camp was finally evacuated. The 15th Sikhs were at the same time replaced by the 2nd Panjab Infantry from the line of communications on account of their heavy losses in action and from sickness. In the meantime numbers of fortified towers and homesteads were being destroyed daily in retaliation for the continued firing into the camp by day and night from houses within range, and after two or three days these stern measures put a stop to the annoyance. On the 21st the Government's terms were at last made known to the *jirgahs* of the Malikdin, Adam, Khamber and Aka Khels, which were in camp. To the other four Afridi clans the terms were communicated by proclamation. A party of Zakka Khels who had been trying to cut off the tail of a convoy on the Arhanga Pass, had been very roughly handled on the 20th by a company of sappers and miners working on the road, who co-operated with two companies of the Gordons on picket duty over the pass; the marauders were caught between two fires as a result of skilful dispositions, and they suffered heavy loss—a most satisfactory little affair.

The reconnaissance through the Dwatoi defile.—The move to Bagh being now completed, Sir W. Lockhart on the 22nd undertook a reconnaissance through the Dwatoi defile. The column detailed for this expedition was placed under command of General Westmacott, and it was made up of the Yorkshires, K.O.S.B.'s, 36th Sikhs, 2nd Ghurkas, 3rd Ghurkas, Ghurka Scouts, 28th Pioneers, two companies of sappers and miners, and two batteries; the Commander-in-Chief accompanied the reconnaissance. General Westmacott despatched the Yorkshires and 2nd Ghurkas before daylight to occupy the higher ridges on either side of the defile, the Yorkshires taking the right side and the Ghurkas the left. The rest of the force moved off some

time later, the 3rd Ghurkas and Ghurka Scouts forming the advanced guard and the 36th Sikhs the rear-guard which was clear of camp about 9 a.m.

The difficulty of the operation.—The defile contracted after a mile or two, and proved to be nothing but a narrow winding gorge for a considerable distance, with the stream brawling over rocks and pebbles at the bottom. The track, such as it was, crossed and recrossed the rivulet, and it was in some places so rough and narrow as to make it almost impracticable for loaded animals; several mules, indeed, fell over the cliffs. Moreover, the main heights, which had been occupied in advance by the Yorkshires and 2nd Ghurkas, were so much cut into by ravines and fissures, there were so many minor spurs and eminences lower down, and the precipitous character of the slopes created so much dead ground about the actual gorge, that hostile marksmen managed to introduce themselves between the troops crowning the main heights and the column, and these gave a great deal of trouble. The whole of the 3rd Ghurkas were soon used up in picketing minor knolls, and the 28th Pioneers became advanced guard. Eventually the head of the column reached Dwatoi about 4 p.m., and even there the enemy offered so determined an opposition that nearly the whole of the available troops had at once to go on picket duty on the hills around. The baggage was in the meantime making slow progress through the defile, and when dusk approached Colonel Haughton, who commanded the rear-guard, decided to halt the whole of the transport and to park it in a convenient spot under protection of his Sikhs and of the regimental baggage-guards. The troops of the main body were wet to the waist and had no great-coats, so that those who had reached Dwatoi suffered greatly from the cold, while the detachments on the heights above the defile were even in a worse

plight. But halting and parking the transport was unquestionably the right action under the circumstances, and as it turned out the baggage columns remained safe and practically unmolested all night.

The day at Dwatoi.—Next morning the Pioneers and sappers and miners were sent back from Dwatoi to improve the road and to help the transport in ; but even so the rear-guard was not in camp till nearly dark. As only the K.O.S.B.'s and 3rd Ghurkas were available in camp during the day, besides the batteries, little extended reconnaissance work could be attempted. Most of the infantry were, indeed, permanently on picket duty on the hills all round the bivouac. Moreover, when one important hill-top was abandoned by mistake, the tribesmen at once occupied it, and two companies of the K.O.S.B.'s only managed to turn them out after a stirring combat at close quarters. Great-coats, blankets, and rations had in the meantime to be sent up by hand to where the Yorkshires and 2nd Ghurkas were distributed along the heights, for the approaches to their positions were too difficult for pack animals to scramble up. Dwatoi is in the territory of the Kuki Khels, and this clan showed itself to be extremely hostile and determined—so much so, indeed, that the return of the column to Bagh, which had been ordered to take place on the following day, the 24th, promised to prove a very troublesome operation.

The successful retirement.—But General Westmacott's happy dispositions saved the force from the severe rear-guard action at the outset that appeared to be in prospect. The breaking up of the bivouacs, the moving off of the transport train, and the drawing in of the pickets from the hills which dominated the camp, were effected so rapidly that the whole column, including the rear-guard (which consisted as usual of the 36th Sikhs under Colonel

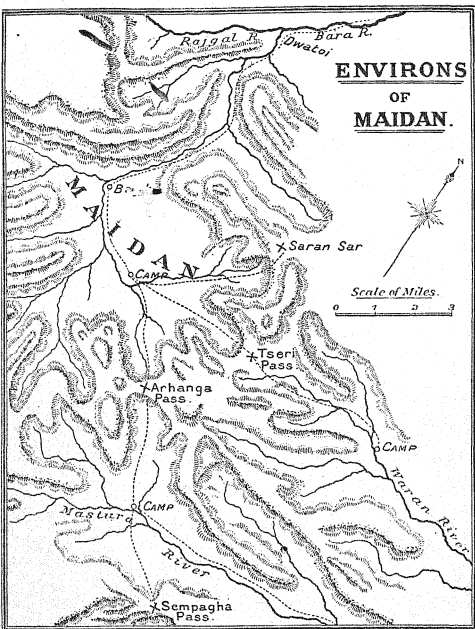
Haughton), was in the defile before the enemy seemed to realise that it was really under weigh. Then the tribesmen closed in on the rear ; but as the heights were all effectively picketed ~~and~~ as the road had been greatly improved, the retirement offered far less difficulty than the advance had done—an unusual feature in such operations. Moreover, an incident which occurred early in the day blunted the edge of the enemy's appetite for pursuit ; some Afridis who were boldly trying to cut off a party of ponies in the gorge were dexterously surrounded by the 36th and bayoneted. ~~After~~ that episode the enemy kept at a respectful distance, and the whole force was back in camp at Bagh before darkness had closed in. The withdrawal of the Yorkshires and 2nd Ghurkas from the heights where they had spent the best part of three days was carried out skilfully and almost without loss.

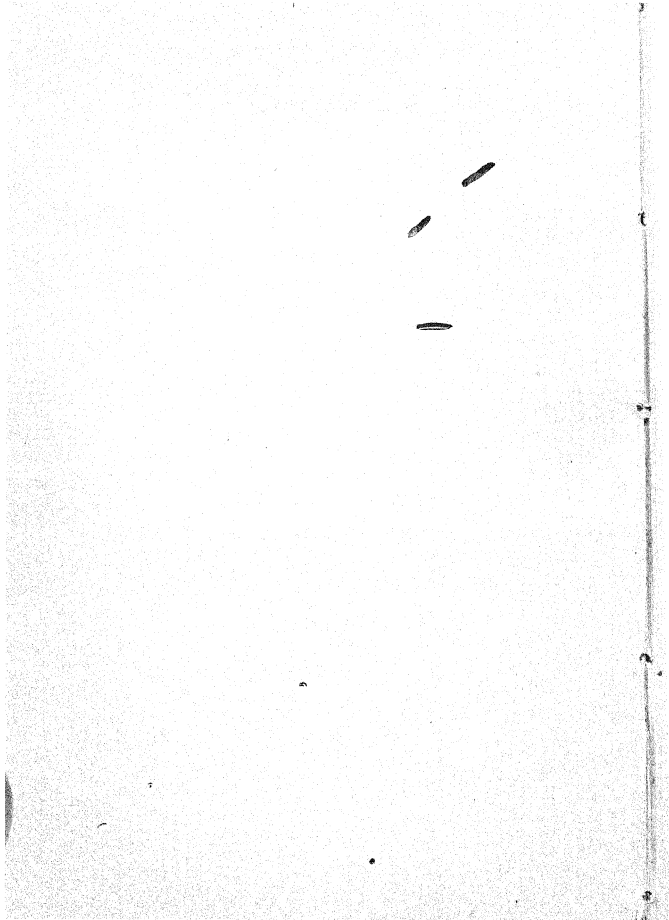
Comments.—The total casualties incurred during this very successful expedition amounted only to 42, a trifling sacrifice taking into consideration the extraordinary topographical difficulties which had to be overcome, both in the matter of the track that was followed and of the unusually intricate character of the spurs and slopes rising up on either side of the defile. The satisfactory outcome of the reconnaissance was to be attributed to the masterly handling of the force as a whole by General Westmacott, to the skilful leadership of the rear-guard both on the outward and on the homeward march, to the growing experience of regimental officers and their subordinates in the art of fighting the Pathan in his own country, and to the mastery of the niceties of picket work in a hill country which, as a result of a month's campaigning, had been acquired by the troops. The plan of holding the main heights throughout served its purposes admirably, and it was undoubtedly a wise disposition of part

of the force, even though it seriously reduced the fighting strength at Dwatoi. Six battalions seems a large body of men ; but it must be remembered that the units engaged were all considerably below strength as a result of a month's strenuous campaigning, and it is likely enough that if circumstances had obliged Sir W. Lockhart to undertake exactly the same thing over again under the same conditions of tribal hostility, he would have detailed a seventh battalion. As it turned out, the force which was at Dwatoi on the 23rd was practically confined to acting on the defensive owing to want of infantrymen. The value of pioneers and sappers and miners in such a force is shown by the fact that, although it had taken the transport two days to get from Bagh to Dwatoi before the track had been improved at the worst places, the column only required one day to get back again. The point suggests itself that the heights might for the first two or three miles of the route have been crowned by infantry detachments sent out from Bagh ; this would have increased the force of infantry remaining in hand at General Westmacott's disposal. Besides, supposing that the pickets were not regularly relieved, taking up blankets and food to those detached from Bagh would have been a simple matter.

The decision to use this route for part of the force.—

As regards the general plan of campaign, the reconnaissance achieved a most important purpose. It satisfied the Commander-in-Chief that after a little improvement of the road had been carried out, the Dwatoi defile offered a quite practicable route for a strong column to reach the main Bara Valley. From what could actually be seen of that valley from Dwatoi it appeared fairly open, and it did not seem to be dominated by hills at very close range. Sir W. Lockhart was, in fact, able to decide finally that he would withdraw part of his force from Tirah by this line.





The operations had also incidentally shown the necessity of instituting stern reprisals against the Kuki Khels of Rajgal, and it was foreseen that special arrangements would have to be made for effecting this object.

The arrangements for evacuating Tirah.—The necessary preliminary arrangements in anticipation of an early evacuation of Tirah had now to be taken in hand. Quite apart from the fact that the Field Force was not supplied with the camp equipment and other requisites without which a stay in so elevated a region during the winter was almost out of the question, the tribesmen were already withdrawing in large numbers to lower ground in accordance with their usual practice; so that if any effective operations were to be carried out during the coldest time of the year against such Afridi clans as had not submitted, these must have the lower Bara Valley, the Bazar Valley, and the environs of the Khyber for their scene, as it was in those localities that the enemy's families and live stock were now collected. After careful consideration, the plan decided upon was that the 2nd Division should march from Bagh via Dwatoi down the Bara Valley to the vicinity of Swaikot (see the sketch map facing page 132), and that the 1st Division was to be concentrated in the Mastura Valley with a view to its marching some distance down that valley and afterwards striking across the intervening hills into the Bara Valley near Swaikot. Somewhere near Swaikot the two Divisions would come in contact with Colonel Hammond's column. Sir W. Lockhart intended to accompany the 2nd Division himself, as this part of his army would be traversing Afridi territory and as it was likely to encounter a good deal of opposition on its march. The two Divisions were to move as flying columns, dispensing with lines of communications and carrying the necessary supplies for the whole march with

them. This arrangement would necessitate large supply columns, and to avoid being encumbered with an excessive transport train it had been decided that the troops must move on the lightest possible scale. All heavy baggage and surplus stores were therefore to be sent back to Shinawari; these impedimenta would then move to Khushalgurh by road, from Khushalgurh to Peshawar by railway, and from Peshawar to the mouth of the Bara Valley by road so as to meet the two columns when they arrived. All weak and sickly men were, moreover, to be sent back to Shinawari, and it had been arranged ~~that~~ a number of selected mules should come up to replace the worst pack-animals at the front.

The expedition into Western Tirah and the Chamkani country.—But before the withdrawal of the main force commenced, and while these preliminary steps were to be gradually carried out as far as was practicable at the time, the western end of Tirah had still to be visited. It was imperative that effective pressure should be brought to bear on the Massozai and the Mamuzai, the two Orakzai clans occupying that part of the country, so as to make sure that they complied fully with the terms imposed by the Government. The Chamkanis had also to be dealt with. This region, moreover, had to be visited in accordance with the announcement which had been made by Sir W. Lockhart some weeks earlier, that he intended to bring troops into every portion of the Afridi and Orakzai territory. It was intended that Colonel Hill's Kuram Valley troops should participate in the work, co-operating with a strong column which was to move westwards from Bagh.

It is not proposed to give a detailed account of the very successful expedition into this remote, mountainous tract. The country proved extremely difficult at first, and the troops were harassed for a time by desultory

opposition at the hands of the Khambar Khels on the Afridi side of the mountain range which they had to surmount before entering the western Orakzai country. The Massozai and Mamozai had been causing a good deal of trouble to Colonel Hill on the borders of the Kuram Valley, and they had been fully expected to resist; but it turned out that only the Chamkanis offered any really serious opposition. The force from Bagh under General Gaselee consisted of his own brigade, supplemented by a wing of the Royal Scots Fusiliers (which had just arrived and which was attached to the 2nd Division), the 2nd Ghurkas, two batteries, and two sapper and miner companies. The column, which was accompanied by the Commander-in-Chief, marched out from Bagh on the 26th and 27th of October, and on the 30th effected a junction with Colonel Hill on the confines of the Chamkani country. As that clan returned defiant answers to the summons sent out to it, the 1st and 2nd of December were devoted to punitive measures directed against it, the first day involving some smart fighting and causing 25 casualties amongst the troops engaged. On the second day the Ghurka Scouts performed brilliant service, the operations were completely successful, and all the enemy's towers scattered over a considerable area were destroyed.

On the 3rd, Colonel Hill moved back to the Kuram Valley, while General Gaselee's force proceeded into the upper Khanki Valley; there it met a column of supplies sent up under escort of some line of communications troops from Karappa. Then General Gaselee marched back across the mountains into Maidan and arrived at Bagh on the 6th. His force had been away for eleven days, had explored a considerable area of unknown country, and had most satisfactorily achieved the object of the campaign in so far as the western portion of Tirah was concerned.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RETIREMENT FROM TIRAH

Evacuation of Tirah begins on the 7th December.—General Yeatman-Biggs had remained in command at Bagh during Sir W. Lockhart's excursion into the western districts with General Gaselee's column, and had been engaged in carrying out those preliminary measures in connection with the projected retirement from Tirah which have already been detailed in the last chapter. Everything was therefore ready for the withdrawal to commence on the day after the main body of the Field Force had become reunited, and the evacuation began on the 7th of December.

Sir W. Lockhart's plan.—Sir W. Lockhart's plan for withdrawing from Tirah has been subjected to much criticism, and some of the tactical details in connection with the march of the 2nd Division down the Bara Valley might, no doubt, have been improved upon. Still, when the strategical conception comes to be appreciated as a whole, it is not easy to see how the combinations decided on by the Commander-in-Chief could have been materially improved upon, unless he had accepted the responsibilities of keeping a portion of his army for some days longer in the heart of this elevated tract when the winter was rapidly approaching. That there was no time to lose in evacuating the uplands was proved by snow actually beginning to fall almost immediately after the

last of the troops quitted Bagh. The conditions of the problem were, in fact, such that Sir W. Lockhart had no choice except to retire the whole of his force with the least possible delay.

The task to be performed.—In reviewing the general strategical situation as it presented itself when Sir W. Lockhart returned to Bagh from the west, it must be understood that the problem he had to solve was not merely how to evacuate Tirah, but also how to conduct certain definite operations while carrying out the evacuation. It was imperative that part of the army should march down the Mastura Valley, because in doing so it would traverse the portion of the eastern Orakzai territory in which no troops had yet appeared. Incidentally this part of the army would be able to chastise the Aka Khels of the Waran Valley for their attack upon General Kempster's column when it was withdrawing from their country on the 16th of November after having spared their habitations. It was even more necessary that a portion of the troops should traverse the Bara Valley; and the situation moreover demanded that steps should at the same time be taken to punish the Kuki Khels of Rajgal for the violent hostility which they had displayed when General Westmacott had visited Dwatoi, and for their refusal to make submission after having been acquainted with the Government's terms. The indications seemed to justify the assumption that the Orakzais would offer little opposition to the march of troops down the Mastura Valley, and that the part of the army detailed for this service would reach the environs of Swaikot with no great trouble beyond that inevitably arising from the topographical difficulties of the route. There seemed to be every prospect that the troops moving down the Bara Valley would, on the other hand, meet with inveterate hostility, for they would be traversing

Afridi territory throughout, and they would be passing through settlements of the Sipan Khels and Zakka Khels and Kuki Khels, all which clans were still maintaining a most defiant attitude.

Question whether the Mastura column should have been started in advance of the Bara column.—It may under these circumstances have suggested itself to the Commander-in-Chief that the Mastura Valley force ought to start first, that it should make its way to Swaikot and should there join hands with General Hammond, and that the two forces should then advance some distance up the Bara Valley so as to open up a line of communications and to facilitate the operations of the other half of the army when it marched down that valley. A plan of this kind would have had the merit of assembling a formidable body of troops in the Bara Valley, and it would have promised the troops retiring from Bagh by Dwatoi that they would meet with a reserve of supplies at some point in the Bara Valley considerably higher up than Swaikot. The result of the arrangement would be that the column which was to traverse Afridi country for thirty or forty miles on its way to the Peshawar Valley would be able to move with a considerably smaller supply column than would be indispensable if it was obliged to march all the way to Swaikot before it could expect to have its supplies replenished.

In the absence of exact details as to the strength in combatants, in followers, and in the various classes of animals, which formed the column that actually marched down the Bara Valley, only a rough idea can be arrived at as to what a day's supplies represented in pack animals. But, assuming that the personnel numbered approximately 2500 British troops, 6000 native troops and 5000 camp followers, the supplies for this personnel per diem would

come to a little over 200 full mule loads of 160 lbs. The total number of animals which accompanied the column is reported to have amounted to 12,000, and it would take over 400 mules to carry the grain alone for these animals for twenty-four hours without any other forage. We may take it then that a single day's supplies for the force must have required fully 600 mules to carry it, and 600 mules passing in single file through a gorge will, even when closed up, take fully 2400 yards of space on the road. Thus, supposing that a co-operating force could have come up the valley a two days' march to meet the Bara Valley column, the length of that column on the line of march might perhaps at times have been reduced by fully three miles. That would represent at least an hour on the road—an important matter in December when the days were at their shortest.

But General Hammond's column was not strong enough to march up the Bara Valley beyond Swaikot by itself, and at the same time to keep its line of communications open; and the Mastura Valley force would take about seven days to join hands with it. Some delay would moreover necessarily arise after the two columns united about Swaikot, before they would be in a position to advance up the Bara Valley, fully equipped. The plan here suggested could, in fact, only have been carried out on the understanding that the troops which were to move from Bagh down the Bara Valley should remain where they were, about Bagh, for some days after the Mastura Valley force had taken its departure; and, as it turned out, the result would have been that they would have been caught by the snow. Besides this, there may not have been sufficient supplies available at Bagh to maintain a large force there completely isolated for an additional week or so.

In narrating the story of the withdrawal of the Field

Force from Tirah, the march of the 2nd Division to Dwatoi and down the Bara Valley will be recorded first. The march of the 1st Division by the line of the Mastura Valley, which met with little opposition, will be dealt with afterwards.

The march of the Bara column.—The Malikdin Khels, through whose territory the Dwatoi defile runs for most of the way from Bagh to Dwatoi, and who had played a prominent part in harassing General Westmacott's column when it had made its reconnaissance through the gorge about three weeks before, had undertaken to remain quiet on this occasion on the understanding that their dwellings would in that case be spared. They had even offered to picket the heights on either side of the defile with unarmed men, and they actually carried this service out. Their attitude greatly facilitated the march as far as Dwatoi, although no military precautions were omitted.

The move to Dwatoi.—The move was headed by the 4th Brigade, accompanied by Sir W. Lockhart and General Yeatman-Biggs, which started from Bagh on the 7th of December. It was estimated that the total distance to near Swaikot would come to about forty miles. The Division was taking seven days' supplies with it.

Some little opposition was encountered from the Kuki Khels at Dwatoi, but their hostility did not appreciably retard the general movement; that night the enemy, however, showed an unusual bent for attacking the pickets on the hills round the camp, and a body of tribesmen made a bold attempt to rush a company of the K.O.S.B.'s in its sangas. The road had been greatly improved since the first occasion on which it had been traversed by troops, and, as there was a favourable moon and as no hostility was being shown within the defile, the transport was able to continue marching during the night. The supply train of the 3rd

Brigade was following the baggage of the 4th Brigade, and in spite of every effort to push the strings of animals rapidly through the Dwatoi, the 3rd Brigade was blocked when it followed on the 8th and it had to bivouac in the defile. Its rear-guard did not eventually reach Dwatoi until the evening of the 9th, so that the Division had taken three days to cover the first seven and a half miles of its march to Swaikot—and this in spite of the fact that the transport had been able to move by night. At the same time as the 3rd Brigade quitted Bagh on the 8th, General Gaselee's brigade marched away in the opposite direction for the Arhanga Pass.

Position on the 9th.—While the 3rd Brigade and the remainder of the impedimenta were slowly making their way through the defile from Bagh, General Westmacott was dealing most effectively with the Kuki Khels in the Rajgal Valley; he succeeded in destroying a large number of their towers and habitations in spite of determined resistance on the part of the tribesmen. These punitive measures having been satisfactorily accomplished, the task which the force assembled at Dwatoi on the evening of the 9th had to perform, was to march a distance of between thirty and thirty-five miles through unknown country to join hands with General Hammond, five days' supplies remaining available. The Intelligence Department was obliged to depend entirely upon native reports with regard to the route. Such reports are notoriously inaccurate on questions of distance and of time in the case of Orientals. Still, it was expected that the operation could be accomplished in four days of marching, which would leave one day's supplies in hand to meet the case of a twenty-four hours' halt, or of any unforeseen delay arising owing to the difficulty of the way or as a result of the machinations of the enemy.

The march of the 10th.—The march down the Bara Valley commenced early on the morning of the 10th. Although the troops were now at a considerably lower elevation than they had been at Bagh, the cold by night was intense, and inasmuch as the march involved frequently fording the Bara River or the channels into which that stream divided itself at many points, combatants and followers alike were wet nearly to the waist, and suffered much discomfort in the chilly air. The 4th Brigade led the advance, followed by the baggage and impedimenta of the whole Division; the 3rd Brigade brought up the rear. The rear-guard was harassed by the tribesmen from the moment that the pickets were drawn in from around Dwatoi, and the long-range rifle fire from the flanks proved exceedingly troublesome at times during the march. The valley turned out to be wide and open at most points, and the transport was therefore often enabled to move on a broad front and to proceed rapidly; but the drivers, discomposed by the occasional bullets and almost stupefied by the cold, became difficult to manage. The very fact that the heights flanking the line of march were so far apart, made it the more difficult for the protecting pickets to prevent hostile marksmen armed with modern rifles from shooting from afar off into the column of troops and transport passing along the valley. The 4th Brigade with the Divisional troops and Headquarters halted for the night at a place called Sandana, about eight miles from Dwatoi. The 3rd Brigade, however, only marched as far as a place called Karana, about three miles short of Sandana, after having been engaged in a troublesome rearguard action practically the whole of the way. Rain came on that night.

The march of the 11th.—Sandana lay in the territory of

the Sipan Khels ; but the march of the next day, the 11th, was through Zakka Khel country. Rain and sleet continued without intermission, and, as on the previous day, the river had often to be forded. It had been anticipated that the advanced troops would meet with a good deal of active opposition ; but the 4th Brigade at the head of the column encountered little hostility from the enemy, and it reached its destination, a place called Sherkhel in Aka Khel territory about ten miles from its starting point, early in the afternoon. Very different were, however, the experiences of the 3rd Brigade.

Difficulties of the 3rd Brigade in starting from camp.—

This had for tactical reasons encamped on the previous evening on a terrace at some height above the bottom of the valley, the approaches to which were somewhat steep and awkward. It had been intended that the brigade should catch up the troops in front, and with this in view it prepared to start at an early hour. But the rain had made the tracks leading down from the bivouacs so slippery that it was found that loaded animals could not use them. Much delay ensued. All the pioneers and sappers and miners were on ahead with the rest of the force, so that very little could be done to improve the exits, and eventually the transport animals had all to move out in single file and to make a long detour to get down into the valley. The rear-guard was not in consequence in a position to move off till 11 a.m. This was a bad beginning for a long day's march. But matters were made worse by the fact that the flanking pickets which had been detached from the 4th Brigade to protect the march from Sandana, had been withdrawn. The work of crowning the heights on the flanks had therefore to be done over again by the 3rd Brigade, and although this operation did not actually present much difficulty, it gave rise to still further

delay. In addition to this, the enemy pressed most obstinately upon the rear-guard from the very outset.

Its harassed march.—For great part of the way the transport could move on a broad front and it made rapid progress; but the occasional long-range musketry from the flanks and the sounds of battle in rear caused consternation amongst the drivers and the crowds of followers connected with the hospitals. The natives were numbed with the icy blast and the wet, and as the day went on the impedimenta towards the rear of the column fell more and more into confusion. Before long the dhoolies transporting sick and wounded had to be carried by combatants, the rear-guard being in the meantime heavily engaged with very superior numbers. The Zakka Khels, who had offered no opposition to the leading troops, had in accordance with their usual practice gathered in swarms, bent on harassing the troops in rear to the utmost.

Decision to press on late in the afternoon.—The head of the 3rd Brigade, with large part of the transport well closed up on its heels, nevertheless reached a point about three miles from Sherkhel before 5 p.m., and came in sight of the bivouacs of the rest of the force. Being under the impression that both the baggage as a whole and the rear-guard were making good progress, believing that the latter was nearer at hand than it actually was at the time, being moreover naturally anxious to reduce the strain of the picket duty on his troops, and probably hoping to make sure that his brigade would not have to bring up the rear on the morrow for a fifth day, General Kempster decided to push on. The brigade, all except a portion of the hospital establishments and some of the transport and the rear-guard, arrived at the main bivouac before it was quite dark, having covered 13 miles since the morning. But as dusk came on the tribesmen began to outflank the rear-

guard and to intervene between it and the rest of the brigade.

Major Downman's rear-guard cut off.—Eventually, when night fell, Major Downman of the Gordons, who was in command of the rear-guard, found himself with a mixed force, consisting of two companies of his own regiment, two companies of the 2nd Ghurkas, one company of the 2nd Panjab Infantry, and a few Dorsets, all these various companies reduced to mere small detachments and encumbered by 21 wounded, practically cut off from the rest of the force. Rising at once to the occasion, and fully realising the perils which would attend an attempt to push on in the dark, he seized a hamlet close at hand which was found to be capable of defence. There he passed the night, closely invested and to a certain extent overlooked by the Afridis, but in comparative safety. But in the meantime the tribesmen had closed in upon the transport and upon the followers who were straggling along between the point where Major Downman had halted his little force, and the bivouac at Sherkhel. As it turned out, fewer followers were cut up, and less baggage was lost than might have been expected considering that they were almost without any protection, the baggage guards being mainly engaged in carrying wounded and sick ; but upwards of 100 followers and about 150 animals seem to have been lost that night. General Kempster went out next morning with two battalions and a battery and brought in the rear-guard. The casualties amongst the combatants on the 11th had amounted to 41.

Comments on the day's operations.—In some respects the 11th must be set down as the most disastrous day of the campaign, although no rifles seem to have been lost and although the casualty list was not a heavy one. Nor would the dispositions for dealing with the situations as

they presented themselves appear to have been uniformly happy.

Unfortunate results partly due to bad luck.—Still, it is only fair to all concerned to remember that the force as a whole, and the 3rd Brigade in particular, in some respects met with very bad luck that day. It was particularly unfortunate that the one wet day of the whole campaign should have fallen on the date when an especially long march was to be carried out. The difficulty in getting the transport away from the Karana bivouac was entirely due to the rain, and it could not have been foreseen either by Sir W. Lockhart or by General Kempster that the tail of the column would be delayed by the transport for two or three hours before it was able to move off. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the route down the Bara Valley was offering no serious obstacles to the movement of a column. Moreover, the Zakka Khels this day allowed the bulk of the force to traverse their territory for several miles almost without interference; and in spite of its falling into great confusion the transport as a whole made remarkably good progress considering that some of it covered thirteen miles. The difficulties experienced in evacuating the terrace where the 3rd Brigade had passed the previous night were undoubtedly aggravated by the absence of any technical troops capable of improving the exits; but the arrangement under which all the pioneers and sappers and miners were accompanying the leading brigade was a very natural one, as it ensured that these corps would be ready to set to work at once if the route, the nature of which was unknown, were found to require labour at any point.

Difficulties of the 3rd Brigade unnecessarily aggravated.—The march from Sandana to Sherkhel was no doubt not a very long one under the circumstances. But the march

from Karana to Sherkhel was a very long one indeed for troops to undertake when there was a practical certainty that throngs of well-armed skirmishers would be hanging on their rear. It may have been the case that there was no suitable ground available at some point two or three miles nearer to Sandana than Sherkhel, for bivouacking a force so large as a Division ; and it has to be remembered that on the night of the 11th the force had only supplies for three more days left, and that it was on that account important to get on as far as possible. But the impartial accounts which have been published of this day's operations undoubtedly convey the impression that the difficulties which the 3rd Brigade might fairly be expected to encounter, had not been appreciated at Headquarters, and that little was done to lighten its task. The march of the 2nd Division was bound to be interpreted by the enemy as partaking of the nature of a retreat, and the experiences, not only of the previous six weeks of warfare but also of numberless previous contests with the hillmen of the North-West Frontier, all pointed to the likelihood that the brunt of the day's fighting would fall on the rear brigade. In spite of this, the flanking pickets were withdrawn before it came up, and it is difficult to believe that any misunderstanding with regard to so simple a matter could have occurred if even reasonably clear instructions had been issued on the subject by the authority responsible for the movement as a whole. The day was wet, and the helio could not therefore be used for communication purposes ; but a hilly country favours flag signalling, and if Sir W. Lockhart was not aware that his rear-guard had been so seriously delayed in the morning, somebody must have been at fault.

The mistake made in not halting betimes.—That a blunder was committed when it was decided, late in the

afternoon, that the 3rd Brigade should push on the last three miles to Sherkhel appears to be beyond dispute. General Kempster was no doubt actuated largely by a well-warranted anxiety to join up with the rest of the force, an anxiety which may have been made all the keener by an idea that he was being in a measure left in the lurch. It was for the interest not only of his own brigade but also for that of the whole force that there should not be two bivouacs but one bivouac. He may perhaps have felt no great confidence that, if he again halted some miles in rear of the remainder of the Division as he had done on the previous afternoon, he would be allowed on the morrow to pass through the 4th Brigade so as to take the lead ; for such a redistribution would probably retard the advance of the force as a whole by fully two hours. Still, even if the transport and the rear-guard had been closer up than they actually were at the time, his decision made it almost certain that a portion of his force would be benighted while on the move. It is hardly conceivable that, had he halted three miles short of Sherkhel and made representations to the Commander-in-Chief on the subject of his brigade continuing to bring up the rear, these would not have received attention. The experiences of Saran Sar and of the Tseri Pass had shown the dangers to which troops are exposed if they are caught by darkness on the march when tribesmen are swarming around them, and if his rear-guard had been in less skilful hands than it was, this might well have met with a grave disaster. If the actual losses after evening closed in were not very serious, the enemy's success in slaughtering a considerable number of helpless followers and in throwing the baggage into confusion, was quite enough to encourage such adversaries to continue their harassing tactics, and it may have spurred them on to act with even more determination than

they had been displaying since the force had quitted Bagh.

Halt on the 12th.—The somewhat unfortunate occurrences of the 11th made it necessary to call a halt of the column on the 12th. The rain had ceased during the previous night, and it was noted when the mists rose from off the hill-sides that all the higher summits on either side of the valley were covered with snow. There were good grounds for hoping that the force would at least get into communication with General Hammond's column on the following day, although it could not expect to reach Swaikot. Arrangements were made that the 3rd Brigade should take the lead, and orders were issued to the effect that troops detached from the leading brigade to crown the heights on the flanks of the line of march were to remain where they were until the rear-guard came abreast of them, and that if it was found desirable they were then to join the rear-guard. It had been ascertained that at a place called Guli Khel, about four miles from Sherkhel, the river entered a narrow gorge which extended for some miles, and that the route to be followed by the column quitted the bottom of the valley there and moved across the northern spurs at some distance from the gorge, only returning to the river again about six miles farther on. The troops were therefore warned that there might be no water at the next night's bivouac, and they were instructed to fill their water-bottles before quitting the stream.

The march of the 13th.—When the march was continued on the morning of the 13th the leading brigade encountered very little opposition, although the column was subjected to long-range fire from the flanks at times. Some troops which had been sent out by General Hammond were met in the afternoon, and the 3rd Brigade with the Divisional troops and the transport bivouacked at a place called

Narkandai, about eight miles from Sherkhel. But the 4th Brigade was fighting a continuous rear-guard action the whole day, and the tribesmen showed a grit and enterprise such as they had not previously displayed on any occasion during the campaign, coming to close quarters in broad daylight with a disregard for danger most unusual in the Pathan.

Owing to the flanks being secured by the pickets detached from the leading brigade, General Westmacott was enabled to place three whole battalions on rear-guard; but all three of them were much below their establishment. He detailed the K.O.S.B.'s, the 3rd Ghurkas and the 36th Sikhs for this duty. The Northhamptons, the wing of the R.S.F. and two batteries formed his main body; this escorted the brigade transport, the wing of the R.S.F. moving off ahead of it. A battalion of the 3rd Brigade had been detailed to march in rear of its transport and the Divisional transport, so that at first a battalion and a half intervened between the two transport columns. But long before reaching even Guli Khel the 4th Brigade transport, surging uncontrollably ahead, had become intermingled with that in front. The drivers, the hospital men and the followers in general were even more overcome by panic this day than they had been on the 11th, and showed themselves even more unmanageable; they were intent only on getting away from the constant musketry which they heard rattling behind them.

Check at Guli Khel.—There was necessarily a prolonged check at Guli Khel, where the animals had to file up a narrow and steep incline out of the bottom of the valley. The Pathans were in the meantime pressing the rear-guard hard, and they took advantage of the pause to make a resolute effort to break in on the flank and to cut the column in half. They were kept at bay, however, at every point.

The troops, all of whom had now come to be experts in the art of hill-fighting, only yielded ground when they chose, and the different detachments conducted their successive withdrawals with admirable precision. But the expenditure of ammunition was very heavy, and even as early as two o'clock in the afternoon the three regiments on rear-guard had already been obliged to replenish pouches freely from the reserve mules. The killed and wounded were furthermore becoming a serious drag on the brigade, because the hospital bearers could no longer be depended upon and their work had to be done by combatants. Still, in spite of the activity and the aggressive spirit made manifest by the hillmen, the transport gradually made its way up out of the valley and pushed on to Narkandai. By this time it was already late in the afternoon. So that when the rear-guard was able to quit the valley and was in a position to follow the rest of the column, it found itself working through the thin scrub and jungle which here covered the spurs traversed by the track, with the light beginning to fail.

General Westmacott's great rear-guard fight.—General Westmacott had been with the rear-guard the whole day. He now found himself with a mixed force, representing mere detachments left over from his five battalions after these had sent on men with the wounded and had found the baggage guards; he had, however, been joined by a number of the 2nd Ghurkas who had been picketing the left flank. The infantry at his disposal only counted, all told, a few hundreds. The batteries had been sent on. The enemy was becoming more and more aggressive, and so, when he was still about two miles short of Narkandai and had satisfied himself that the transport was safe, the General decided to take up a position on an adjacent ridge for the night.

Scarcely had the troops occupied their ground, when the Afridis came right at them through the scrub in a ferocious swarm, yelling and firing. The position was none too favourable for defence, as the slope in front offered but a limited field of fire, and it was growing almost too dark to take certain aim. But the steadiness and confidence of officers and men made up for all topographical and atmospheric deficiencies. The tribesmen were first brought to a standstill. Then they melted away before the hail of bullets poured into them. And although prowlers hung about the ridge where General Westmacott had given his antagonists so warm a reception all night long, no further concerted attack upon it was attempted, and the victorious rear-guard passed the hours of darkness almost unmolested, proud in the knowledge that it had inflicted the most serious defeat upon the tribesmen which they had sustained since the day of Dargai. Not a single follower or baggage animal had been cut off this day, in spite of the daring and initiative displayed by the enemy and of the confusion into which the transport had fallen owing to the terror and indiscipline of the drivers. The losses amounted to 25 killed and to over 80 wounded amongst the combatants, and there had also been a few casualties owing to stray bullets amongst the followers.¹

Comments.—It is worthy of note with regard to this day's operations, that, in spite of the masterly handling of his brigade by General Westmacott, in spite of the fact that there was no hitch as to the picketing of the hills flanking the line of march, and in spite of the comparative shortness of the distance from Sherkhel to Narkandai, the rear-guard had to remain out isolated all night. Only

¹ A remarkably clear and vivid account of this memorable day's fighting is to be found in Mr. Lionel James' *The Indian Frontier War*, 1897.

one day's supplies were being carried by the transport this day, the rest having been all consumed, and the previous day's halt had admitted of the loads on the animals being readjusted; so that the transport was travelling particularly light. Moreover, the route was fairly good throughout, except at the point where the track quitted the river. Apart, in fact, from the determined attitude of the tribesmen and from the strong force in which they assembled to harass the column, the conditions were by no means unfavourable. And yet the whole of the force could not manage to cover even eight miles before darkness set in. This seems to illustrate the danger attending attempts to carry out long marches with a large body of troops and impedimenta in this kind of warfare.

The last day's march to Swaikot.—The rear-guard action recommenced next morning as soon as General Westmacott moved off, the Afridis occasionally pressing on the heels of his troops as they made their way through the scrub after the rest of the force. But, whether it was due to the moral effect of the decisive repulse which they had met with on the previous evening, or whether it is to be ascribed to a recognition on the part of the tribesmen that the Bara Valley column was within reach of support and that it had practically reached its journey's end, they showed little of the determination that they had displayed on the 11th and on the 13th. The whole force moved rapidly forward, and after going a few miles met a portion of General Hammond's column coming out to meet it. The march was continued to Swaikot, up to which point a fairly good road had been constructed from Peshawar, and that evening the whole of the Division was encamped within the area guarded by General Hammond's pickets. General Symonds's Division from the Mastura Valley had already come in and had moved on to near Bara Fort

in the Peshawar Valley, clear of the hills. The 2nd Division and General Hammond's column followed it thither within the next two days, pending operations in the Bazar Valley and the Khyber Pass.

The march down the Bara Valley as a whole.—Thus ended the retirement from Tirah of that part of his army which Sir W. Lockhart had selected for the march down the Bara Valley and which he had accompanied himself. It had carried out an operation of war which had proved extraordinarily trying to all who had taken part in it. Troops and followers alike had undergone unwonted hardships owing to the wet and to the cold. They had been harassed almost unceasingly by fitful, but by no means innocuous, long-range fire at the hands of antagonists with whose skulking tactics it had been impossible to cope effectually. Time had been lacking to undertake offensive operations, even on the smallest scale, since the morning when the force had turned its back on Dwatoi. The enemy had interpreted the movement as a whole as being one of retreat, had shown even more than usual military aptitude in the art of partisan warfare, and had manifested a spirit and a persistency in the congenial task of following up the rear-guard such as savage warriors are rarely capable of. The difficulty created by the wounded—always a serious one in hill warfare against uncivilised opponents—had assumed quite exceptional proportions owing to the virtual collapse of the ordinary arrangements for transporting the sick in hospital, due to the panic which had seized upon the native bearers; this had resulted in withdrawing a quite inordinate number of rifles out of the fighting ranks. The desultory musketry of the Afridis had combined with the exposure which they were undergoing to reduce the transport drivers in general to such a condition of misery and terror that they had at times become almost un-

controllable, and their undisciplined behaviour had to no small extent augmented the perplexities of a trying situation. The march had no doubt effected its object, in so far as the question of transferring the troops that took part in it from Tirah to the Peshawar Valley was concerned. The Bara Valley had been traversed from end to end. The Afridi habitations and defences in the immediate vicinity of the river had been systematically reduced to smouldering ruins. The Kuki Khels had been chastised fairly effectively in Raigal. When on the last day but one of the march the tribesmen had committed themselves to a definite attack upon General Westmacott's stalwart rear-guard, they had been beaten off decisively and with heavy loss. But the Zakka Khels, the Sipan Khels and even the Kuki Khels, showed no signs of making submission. Although an Anglo-Indian army had spent several weeks in the heart of Tirah, and although troops had penetrated into practically every important valley within that elevated area, the portents all pointed to the probability of a fresh campaign being forced upon the Indian Government in this remote upland region in the coming spring.

The march of the mastura column to Swaikot.—It is necessary now to revert to the operations of General Symonds's Division, which had retired from Tirah by the other route; but it is not proposed to treat of these at length, seeing that this part of the army met with very little opposition during its withdrawal.

The 2nd Brigade quitted Bagh to join the rest of the Division in the Mastura Valley on the 8th of December, and on that same day the movement down that valley began, the 1st Brigade leading off with some of the divisional troops, while the 2nd Brigade was to follow as a second echelon. The force was carrying six days' supplies

with it. On the 9th, while the troops in rear closed up, General Hart's brigade, reinforced by the 21st Madras Pioneers, the Nabha Imperial Service Infantry and two batteries, struck across the intervening hills and swooped down into the Waran Valley. The Zakka Khel and Aka Khel were taken wholly unawares, but they assembled in considerable numbers and offered such opposition as they could. In spite of their resistance a great number of their towers and habitations were, however, speedily destroyed, and, thanks to the dexterous handling of the force during a most successful day of punitive operations, the casualties suffered by the troops were trifling.

On the 10th, the 1st Brigade moved down the Mastura Valley to the point where it was proposed to turn off over the mountains into the Bara Valley; the 2nd Brigade bivouacked that night a few miles farther back. The 11th was spent in improving the track leading up to the Sapri Pass, by which it was proposed to cross the range; the approaches to the kotal were found to be most difficult, and much blasting and pick-and-spade work were necessary to make a route fit for the passage of laden baggage animals. Rain and snow moreover fell on this day, so that the Mastura column experienced the same weather as was proving so trying to the Bara Valley column on this same date. On the 12th the 1st Brigade moved off very early, and part of it crossed the hills and moved on to within a few miles of Swaikot; but the difficulties of the track beyond the kotal were found to be serious, so that portions of the brigade had to spend the night on the pass. Foreseeing that the troops in rear might be seriously blocked on the following day if the route was not cleared, and aware that they were only rationed up to the 14th, General Hart, after seeing that the heights were effectively picketed, had fires lighted along the route so that the animals could

T I R A H

BAZAR

VALLEY

Myittha

Samrod

Sardana

Shorkhel

Sahi Khel

Narkandai

Rajgal

Karana

B ara

River

Dwatoi

R

I

Swai kot

A

F

R

A

H

T Bagh

Maidan

Waran

Arhang Pass

River

Mastura

Mastura

Sempagha Pass

Gandaki

Karappa Camp

Karappa

O S A M

Dargai

Chagru Kotai

N A R A N G E

K

Karlach

Riv

To Kohat

Scale of Miles.

0 5 10

Shinawari



be pushed on during the night. In consequence of these measures the rear brigade was not checked when it advanced on the 13th, and the road had in the meantime been improved at the worst points. On that day the head of the Division was in touch with General Hammond's force, and on the 14th it marched on into the Peshawar Valley so as to leave room about Swaikot for the Bara Valley column.

A few Afridis had hung about the rear of General Symonds's troops during the passage of the Sapri Pass; but no concerted attempt to harass the retirement had been made by the enemy at any point. Apart from the difficulties of the route over the pass and from the discomfort suffered from the cold and wet, the march of General Symonds's Division calls in fact for no special comment; but the excursion into the Waran Valley had been a particularly satisfactory episode in the course of the withdrawal from Tirah of this portion of the Field Force.

CHAPTER IX

THE END OF THE WAR

The war not yet over.—With the return of Sir W. Lockhart and the two Divisions that formed the mobile portion of the Field Force to civilisation on the borders of the Peshawar Valley, the Tirah campaign proper had come to an end—at least for the moment. It is not proposed to give a detailed account of subsequent events. But when the Field Force quitted the Afridi country in the middle of December, four of the clans composing that truculent community still remained in a state of open war with the Indian Government, there seemed to be little prospect of their submitting to the inevitable without further coercion, and the circumstances consequently forbade the dispersing of the Field Force and obliged the Indian Government to maintain a large body of troops on a war footing. To make the story complete, the principal occurrences which followed will be sketched in outline.

Reduction of the Field Force.—Although it was to be expected that the Afridis would be prepared to offer resistance when the Khyber Pass was reoccupied and when a visit was paid to the Bazar Valley, the Orakzais were now satisfactorily disposed of. In consequence of this, a certain reduction in the number of troops being maintained on a war footing was judged to be permissible. The Reserve Brigade at Rawal Pindi was broken up and its two British battalions replaced the Dorsets and the Northampton's,

both of which had been considerably weakened by losses in action and by sickness since the advance from Shinawari. General Yeatman-Biggs, who had been in indifferent health from the outset, was obliged to relinquish command of his Division, and he died a few weeks later. The line of communication troops were dispersed, and Sir A. P. Palmer took over command of the 2nd Division; this, however, was not called upon to participate in the active operations which Sir W. Lockhart had decided to carry out immediately.

Reoccupation of the Khyber.—The reoccupation of the Khyber was entrusted to General Hammond. The work was carried out practically without opposition between the 22nd and the 26th of December; but the local Afridis refused to pay the fines which were imposed upon them, and this necessitated the undertaking of certain punitive expeditions into some of the minor valleys opening on to the main defile. These undertakings brought about some sharp fighting, and a number of the enemy's defences were destroyed; but after a few days the tribesmen all disappeared, and it was ascertained that they had gone southwards, so as to escape from the visitations of the troops.

Punitive measures in the Bazar Valley.—In the meantime General Symonds's Division, which was accompanied by Sir W. Lockhart, had moved into the Bazar Valley in two columns. The principal villages in the district were destroyed, the Afridis offering little opposition to these measures while the troops were advancing and were carrying out demolitions, but following up all retirements with pertinacity. The force remained for five days in this portion of the enemy's country, carrying out its task of chastisement deliberately; nevertheless, when the two columns came to return to the Peshawar Valley, the tribesmen followed them up with a spirit and determination

which showed that these warlike mountaineers by no means acknowledge themselves as beaten. For some weeks afterwards, however, nothing of note took place, and the headmen began to show encouraging symptoms of a disposition to negotiate with the Political Officers.

Reverse near Swaikot.—Even the Zakka Khels were displaying a more accommodating mood, and the prospects of a settlement had become favourable when a very unfortunate incident occurred. It had been discovered that the tribesmen were in the habit of driving some of their herds down out of the hills ~~on~~ to a plain a few miles north of Swaikot to graze. A plan was formed for capturing these by means of a concerted movement of four separate columns which were to come upon them from the north, the north-east, the east, and the south. This operation was fixed to take place on the 29th of January. It would seem, however, that the enemy must have been apprised of what was in contemplation.

Three of the columns returned to their camps after a long day's march, having seen neither herds nor enemy ; but the southern force, which advanced from near Swaikot, met with a minor disaster. It consisted of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 200 of the 36th Sikhs, and two guns, and when the troops came to retire they were severely beset in difficult ground. In the thick of the fight a picket was withdrawn from a most important height owing to some misunderstanding over a signalling message, and the point was at once occupied by the Afridis. Several casualties occurred in endeavouring to recapture the knoll, and the usual difficulty over wounded arose and placed the force in a most critical position. It managed to continue its retreat, however, and a message sent back to camp brought out General Westmacott with a relieving force. The casualties nevertheless amounted

to 27 killed and 32 wounded, amongst the former being Colonel Haughton, who had made so great a name for himself in Tirah.

Conclusion of peace.—It was feared that this untoward affair would encourage the tribesmen to persist in their refusal to submit to the Government's conditions. But its effect did not prove to be so disastrous as was at first anticipated. For, as the snow began to disappear from the hilltops, and as the signs of spring became visible, the hillmen displayed from day to day a greater readiness to negotiate. The spectacle of the huge encampments fringing the borders of their territory can have left little doubt on their minds as to what was in store for them should they continue to remain obdurate. They must have realised that a fresh inundation of their valleys by a hostile soldiery would come upon them within a very few weeks, unless they yielded at discretion. They must have foreseen that many a hamlet still standing in the ravines flanking the Bara Valley would be marked down for destruction. They may well have feared that, if hostilities were once resumed, an Anglo-Indian army would spend the summer in the pleasant uplands of Maidan, and that a permanent garrison might even take up its abode in the heart of their country. Moreover, Sir W. Lockhart's presence was exerting an all-powerful influence in the direction of securing peace. His uncompromising firmness and inexhaustible patience, coupled with a personality at once sympathetic and commanding which was well known to many of the headmen amongst the wayward clans, proved to be an invaluable asset to the Indian Government, and contributed enormously towards the bringing about of a settlement. During the early weeks of March all the subdivisions except the Zakka Khels had agreed to pay their fines, and before that month had closed

the one remaining recalcitrant clan also decided to pray for a cessation of hostilities, and to accede to the demands of a Power which had proved too strong for it.

Tidings reached the Afridis on the borders of the Peshawar Valley a few days later that the distinguished soldier, who had marched an army into Tirah in defiance of their boast that no foeman should ever penetrate into their summer home, who had thrust his troops without hesitation into the inmost fastnesses of their mountain territory, and who, during the long-drawn-out negotiations for peace, had refused to abate by one jot the onerous terms which he had announced to their *jirgahs* at Bagh several months before, was about to depart, his task accomplished. Then an extraordinary sight was seen. Swarms of wild hillmen gathered together around Sir W. Lockhart's house in Peshawar. They begged that they might be allowed to carry him shoulder high. They vowed that in future they would fight on the side of the British, no matter who the enemy might be, and not against them. They accorded their conqueror an ovation such as few victorious generals receive at the hands of those who have served under their orders. It was a singularly dramatic ending to a memorable campaign.

CHAPTER X

SOME LESSONS OF THE CAMPAIGN

Importance of sufficient time being allowed to carry out the task in a case of this kind.—The operations of 1897 in Tirah provide a striking illustration of the importance of the principle that, if a serious punitive campaign of this kind is to be carried out and to be brought to a satisfactory conclusion, it is imperative that the troops detailed for the undertaking shall be allowed ample time to complete their work. Although the event proved that a fresh expedition on a great scale into the heart of the Afridi country was not necessary in the spring of 1898, the fact remains that the more important one of the two great tribes against which Sir W. Lockhart had taken the field in October, remained unbeaten when the Field Force returned to Indian territory in the middle of December. It is true that the further operations of the next few weeks were not of a very arduous character, and that they called for no extreme exertions nor great display of force. But it has to be remembered that fully three-fifths of the army that was originally mobilised to chastise the Afridis and Orakzais, had to be maintained on a war footing for upwards of three months after the return of the Field Force to India, while the question of the submission of the tribesmen remained in doubt, and that this caused enormous expense to the Indian Government. That an accommodation was arrived at in the end was, moreover, undoubtedly very

largely due to Sir W. Lockhart's personality. The Tirah campaign proper—the operations, that is to say, which opened with the first combat of Dargai and which closed with the march of the 2nd Division, the men all “drawn, pinched, dishevelled, and thoroughly worn,” into Swaikot—was in fact far from being completely successful. And one reason why an enterprise which had opened so auspiciously was signalised by so doubtful an ending, is undoubtedly to be found in the fact that the troops were operating against time. A period of only eight weeks was not sufficient to admit of the army fully accomplishing its purpose.

Force obliged to evacuate Tirah before its work was completed.—It is not, of course, suggested that anyone was to blame for this. The thing was unavoidable. Climatic conditions may be said to have dictated a withdrawal of the troops from Tirah by a certain date; and the strain which had been thrown upon the transport resources at the command of the Indian military authorities by the campaigns in progress during the summer of 1897 in various sections of the North-West Frontier region, had made it virtually impossible for Sir W. Lockhart to get his army into motion sooner than he did. But the space of time which the circumstances of the case allowed for the prosecution of the campaign was not long enough to permit of this fully achieving its object; and that this was the case became very apparent during the march down the Bara Valley from the bivouacs around Dwatoi.

The plan of marching the army out of the theatre of war as two flying columns would seem to have been undoubtedly the right one to decide upon under the conditions that existed early in December. Indeed, as far as General Symonds's Division was concerned, the operation was highly successful. But the march of the Bara force,

although it accomplished the object of getting the troops and impedimenta composing the column down to the Peshawar Valley, was very far from ranking as a triumphant combination of war. It is true that the column left a train of smoking ruins in its wake; but it was persistently harassed the whole of the way, it must have at times presented to the ferocious hillmen dogging its footsteps the appearance of an army in flight, and if the enemy was decisively worsted on the last day but one of the march, this incident was partly to be attributed to the fact that the plight of the troops tempted the foe to take unwarranted liberties. The truth is that, when a point-to-point march of thirty miles through a difficult mountainous country, infested with determined guerillas, is being carried out by a military force which is encumbered with a mass of transport, the troops in reality represent merely an escort for their own supplies and baggage, and they are deprived of all initiative. The Bara Valley was in the very midst of the Afridi territory, and it was a district which emphatically demanded methodical and deliberate treatment.

It was pointed out in Chapter VIII how much might have been gained if the 2nd Division could have waited near Bagh until the 1st Division had united with General Hammond's force, because troops could then have marched some distance up the valley to meet the column moving down it. But a full fortnight would probably have been required to deal thoroughly with this belt of Afridiland. It was a belt inhabited by clans which had hitherto given no signs of submission. To completely dominate it for several days, it would probably have been necessary to establish a line of communications from Swaikot right up to Dwatoi. For this there was no time. The period available for chastising the tribesmen of this

region in 1897 was not long enough to admit of the task being completed.

Long marches objectionable in this kind of hill warfare.—Another important lesson which the campaign seems to teach is that in hill warfare of this character long marches are generally to be deprecated.

Owing to the great space which even comparatively small bodies of troops take up on the road, because of their impedimenta being carried on pack animals which often have to march in single file, it comes about that the head of the column sometimes reaches the new camp before its tail has quitted the old one. The heights on either flank of the route must be methodically picketed, otherwise the force is likely to be fired into from the flank. If the march be a prolonged one, the detachments sent out to mount guard over the road on either hand are apt to become so serious a drain upon the available combatants, that there may not eventually be troops enough left at the front to brush away opposition and to furnish pickets to make a ring round the new camp. It will be remembered that on the occasion of the first expedition to Dwatoi there were barely sufficient infantrymen left to hold the heights around that place when the head of the column got there, although this particular march was quite a short one in point of actual distance covered.

Another objection to long marches is that when—as so often happens—the rear is delayed for a long time before it can move off, or when its progress is being constantly checked during the day by congestion on the road ahead of it, the last of the troops may not be able to reach their destination before dark. The thirteen-mile march of the 2nd Division from Shinawari to Karappa on the 20th of October was interrupted by the fight for the Dargai ridge; but, taking into consideration the difficulty which

was experienced on the morrow and on the day after that in getting the divisional impedimenta to beyond the Khanki, it is safe to say that the whole force would not have reached Karappa by daylight on the 20th, even if the enemy had not shown up in force on the left flank and brought on a general engagement. Had it not been for the difficulty of getting the transport started on the 11th of December owing to the rain, there is no reason to suppose that General Kempster's brigade would not have accomplished the thirteen-mile march from Karana to Sherkhel without any portion of it being benighted; but it must be remembered that this was a case of a single brigade, that the route presented few difficulties, and that the pack animals travelled that day at a great pace.

Long marches sometimes unavoidable.—It must of course be understood that for practical purposes the question of the length of a march depends very largely on the nature of the route which is being followed. In point of time taken on the route, the march from Karana to Sherkhel represented less of an effort than that from Bagh to Dwatoi, which was not much more than half the distance. Still, circumstances quite beyond a commander's control will sometimes oblige him to make an inconveniently long march. There may, for instance, be no suitable camping ground or no water within reasonable distance of the starting point—as was the case on the road over the Samana between Shinawari and the Khanki. Or again, it may be imperative to reach some point many miles from the starting point, because supplies have run out. It is interesting to note in this connection, however, that on the last day but one of the campaign, the Bara column halted early in the afternoon at a point where there was no water, after covering only about eight miles; the [resulting inconvenience to men and animals was accepted on this

occasion in preference to the risks which would have been involved to the troops at the rear of the column, had those in advance pushed on the three miles or so, to where the route returned to the river again.

It is often quite impossible to foresee how much opposition the troops at the head of the column may be going to encounter. On only one occasion during the Tirah campaign, that of the march of the 2nd Division on the day of the second fight of Dargai, can uncertainty on this point be said to have given rise to serious difficulty. On the days of the forcing of the Sempagha Pass and of the Arhanga Pass, opposition was fully expected, and all the impedimenta were in consequence left in rear under escort. On no other occasion, except these and the day of the first advance from Bagh to Dwatoi, were the advanced troops seriously engaged during the operations. It was almost invariably the troops in rear who had the fighting to do, and it was to them that the length of the marches as a rule was of such vital importance. At the same time, it would be inexpedient to generalise unduly from the experiences of this particular set of operations. It would be a mistake to assume that, even in the case of hill warfare against Pathans, the length of marches is only to be gauged by what the rear-guard may be expected to accomplish, and to imagine that checks at the head of the column are never to be expected except as a consequence of topographical difficulties.

Question of a force being unable to reach camp before dark.—This question of the length of marches leads up to another one with which it is intimately connected—the question as to what action ought to be taken by a force, or portion of a force, which finds that it cannot reach its destination before darkness closes in upon it. Although this point as a rule only becomes of paramount importance

when the troops concerned are in presence of the enemy, it must not be forgotten that pack animals are apt to make slow progress at night if there be no moon, quite apart from anything that the enemy may do, and that this tends to break them down. On this subject of detachments being overtaken by darkness, the lessons of the Tirah campaign are particularly instructive. On practically every single occasion on which a portion of the Field Force met with anything that could be construed into a reverse or that could be described as an untoward incident, the occurrence was attributable to troops being caught on the move in the dark. The story of the operations may indeed be said to be almost conclusive in the evidence which it affords of the perils to which troops are likely to be exposed on the North-West Frontier of India if they have the bad luck to be benighted on the march when the tribesmen are showing activity in their vicinity.

Importance of halting in good time if march cannot be completed by daylight.—On the memorable evening of the 16th of November, Colonel Haughton saved the situation below the Tseri Pass by his resolution and by his timely assumption of the initiative; but it was already nearly dark at the moment when he made up his mind to seize the smouldering buildings and to halt there for the night. A week later the same leader found himself again in the late afternoon in charge of a rear-guard which was still a long distance from camp, and on the second occasion he had a large quantity of transport under his protection. It is significant that the second time he halted his force before dusk and that he had made all his defensive arrangements ere the light failed, and it is interesting to contrast the procedure adopted by this brilliant soldier on the two evenings and to speculate whether, had he been fighting his fight on the Tseri Pass over again, he would

not have halted his little force some time earlier than he did on the 16th of November. On the 13th of December General Westmacott's force took up its position on the ridge where the Afridis attempted to rush it, some little time before the evening closed in, and that would generally seem to be the wiser course to pursue. There is always a great temptation to push on as far as possible, in the lingering hope that it may be possible after all to reach the destination before dark. But to give way to the temptation may lead to a disaster.

Pickets seldom attacked in Tirah.—On one point which is closely connected with this subject, the experiences of the Tirah campaign may almost be said to be conclusive—a small body of troops which has taken up a reasonably secure defensive position seems to be fairly safe in the dark against Afridis or Orakzais. On only one occasion does a really serious attempt to rush a picket appear to have been made. But incidents which had occurred in the fighting a few weeks earlier about Malakand, north of the Peshawar Valley, places it beyond doubt that certain Pathan tribesmen will commit themselves to very determined assaults upon defensive posts in the darkness, so that there can be no general rule in the matter. In any case, there must always be a good deal of difference between the situation of a picket of well-armed combatants, and that of a crowd of followers and animals guarded by detachments of combatants. To ensure the safety of an assemblage of this latter kind, it will generally be necessary to dispose the surrounding pickets very skilfully. It will, moreover, as a rule be desirable that the defensive arrangements shall have been made while there is good light, and at an early enough hour of the day to admit of the pickets (which will probably have to be numerous and small) throwing up efficient breastworks for their own protection ;

transport invariably takes up a good deal of room, and a defensive perimeter all round it will almost always absorb more combatants than are available on such occasions. Tirah experiences then seem to suggest that, when a rear-guard has impedimenta under its charge—as was the case with Major Downman's force on the 11th of December—it will be advisable to call a halt earlier in the afternoon than would be necessary when the rear-guard has only itself to look after.

It is seldom that a single campaign lasting only a few weeks provides so many examples all pointing in the same direction, as the operations against the Afridis and Orakzais do with regard to the danger of being caught by darkness while on the move.

The art of conducting retirements in this kind of warfare.—The operations of Sir W. Lockhart's army throw a remarkable amount of light upon the problems which arise when conducting retirements in this kind of warfare, and they afford some admirable examples of the management of rearguards under such conditions. One lesson that seems to be taught by the episodes of the campaign is that when Pathans are following up a column it is generally expedient to keep strengthening the rearguard during the course of the day. This harassing rear-guard work is as a rule brought about either when a force is proceeding from one camp to another, or else when a body of troops has moved out from some camp to carry out a reconnaissance, or to collect forage, or to conduct punitive operations, and proposes to return to its starting-point in the afternoon when its task is completed. In either case the force as a whole will ordinarily be approaching some comparatively speaking safe locality late in the day. This makes it permissible to weaken the strength of the detachments at the head of the column in the interests of strengthening

those at its tail. The centre of gravity can—and generally ought to be—pushed back, as it were, during the course of the day's work.

Rear-guard ought to be gradually strengthened during the march.—If this system be adopted there is every probability that the rear-guard towards evening will have become strong enough to beat off those onslaughts on the part of the enemy which so often tend to become fiercer and more determined as the day draws to its close. The system provides, moreover, for filling up the serious gaps which casualties are likely to be causing in the rear-guard. It must be remembered that five men seriously wounded means thirty men taken out of the ranks, and that, at the end of several hours of strenuous fighting, the difficulty over the killed and injured may have decimated the units originally told off to protect the rear.

The arrangements must differ, in fact, considerably from those which experience has proved to be the most suitable in regular warfare. In regular warfare the main body as a rule pushes along as fast as it can, so as to escape from the attentions of the pursuers, and it leaves the rear-guard to keep these at bay as best it can. But in operations against savage guerillas that method of proceeding is inappropriate. The main body must in such conflicts to a certain extent conform its pace and adapt its dispositions to the progress of the troops in rear, because the enemy's mobility enables him to outflank these and to cut them off if they are unsupported.

The plan which was adopted on the last two days of the march down the Bara Valley, under which the detachments, originally sent out from the advance guard to picket the heights on either flank of the route, joined the rear-guard when this came approximately abreast of them, had the great advantage that the rear-guard was reinforced

automatically as the day went on. But this arrangement has, on the other hand, the drawback that units become intermingled to an inconvenient extent. The advantages perhaps outweigh the disadvantages; but such a procedure can in any case only be put in force when the flank guards are stationary, which is not always the case.

Mobile flanking forces.—When the successive heights have to be carried in face of opposition, it is generally found best that flanking forces, each under a special commander, should march along the heights parallel to the main portion of the column. This procedure, which was adopted on the left during the short march from Karappa to Gandaki on the 28th October, ensures that there shall be cohesion and unity of purpose in the operations of these protective bodies of troops. The system of detailing mobile flank guards is also often found convenient when the heights on either side of the route form a more or less continuous range of hills which is little intersected by transverse ravines and valleys—when the heights display this kind of conformation, troops can move along them without incurring undue fatigue and without causing delay to the column. In Tirah little opposition was as a rule offered to detachments sent out to the flanks to crown the heights, and the hills were so rugged and broken that a system of mobile flank guards was not generally found either to work satisfactorily or to be necessary; but this, it must be understood, does not necessarily represent a normal condition of affairs. When the flanking detachments move parallel to the column, or when there are no such detachments, the rear-guard can, of course, only be reinforced by parties dropping off from the main body.

Handling of rear-guards.—The question whether the force is encumbered with impedimenta at the time,

naturally makes a great difference in the management of retirements and in the handling of rear-guards. When the troops concerned are accompanied by a large amount of transport, the commander should apparently keep two things constantly in his mind—the importance of getting the non-combatant portion of his column to its destination as fast as possible, and the danger of leaving the rear-guard in the lurch owing to the main body moving too rapidly. The principle would seem to be to move off with a strong advanced guard and main body, and then to pass the transport through the troops as the head of the column approaches the destination, holding the troops back so as to gradually add to the strength of the detachments in rear as these move forward. Up to a certain point, the retirement from the Waran Valley on the 16th November was conducted on this principle, and very skilfully. General Kempster had assembled the bulk of his combatants in rear of the impedimenta after the middle of the day, and the strength of the troops guarding the transport was constantly dwindling as the head of the column drew nearer and nearer to Maidan; the difficulties which arose late in the day are to be attributed to a failure to realise in time that the rear-guard, sorely beset as it was, could not possibly reach camp before dark.

Position of commander during retirements.—It was mentioned in Chapter VIII that General Westmacott remained with his rear-guard the whole of the day when in command of the rear brigade on the 13th of December. No rule can, of course, be laid down on such a point as this; but in the case of warfare in the Indian hills there is undoubtedly a great deal to be said in favour of the commander of a force during a harassed retirement remaining far back in his column. When the situation develops itself sufficiently to make it clear that—as so often happened in Tirah

—the progress of the rear-guard is going to prove the main source of anxiety, there can be no doubt that the presence of the senior officer either with, or else in close vicinity to, the rear-guard tends to ensure that this shall receive the support that it requires from the troops which have gone on in advance. In the modern battle on a great scale the general's place will usually be at the junction of the telephones, in a part of the field, very likely, where he can actually see little of what is going on. But in the petty affrays which are characteristic of hill warfare, it is different. In such affairs the commander ought to be where he can best observe and supervise the main operation of the day. When the main operation of the day is taking place at the tail of a column on the march, the general who moves in the orthodox position near the head of the main body is not unlikely to lose touch altogether with important events which may be occurring in rear, and which may ultimately upset the whole of his plans.

Effect of enemy having fire-arms of long range and of precision.—The campaigns of 1897 on the North-West Frontier of India supply practically the first example of regular troops engaging in operations against savage antagonists armed with modern fire-weapons of precision. The Afridis were better supplied with breech-loading rifles, owing to their wealth, than any other one of the numerous tribes which that year embarked on hostilities against the Anglo-Indian army in the hilly region that extends from Waziriland to Swat. The experiences of the Tirah Field Force are therefore especially instructive in respect to the light which they throw upon the question of the influence that the importation of accurate long-range fire-arms into remote regions is likely to have upon the small wars of the future. The difficulties encountered by Sir W. Lockhart's troops indicate that the result of this

traffic in arms will be to sensibly increase the dangers to which the forces of civilisation are exposed.

It was not only in the more important engagements that the accurate musketry of the tribesmen caused casualties and gave rise to delay. The foraging expeditions sent out almost daily from Karappa while the Field Force was assembling there, and when it was operating in the Mastura Valley and in Maidan, were constantly providing illustrations of a force of regular soldiers being seriously harassed by a few scattered guerillas firing into them at long range. The severest combats of the campaign—the storming of Dargai on the 20th of October, the evening affrays on the days of the first reconnaissance to Saran Sar and of the retirement over the Tseri Pass, and the final encounter when the tribesmen threw prudence to the winds and attacked General Westmacott's rear-guard in position on the 13th of December—scarcely brought this long-range firing into play. Rather was its effect noticeable in the minor skirmishes which were of almost daily occurrence. It was found, moreover, that this musketry caused especial inconvenience in those portions of the theatre of war where the terrain was, relatively speaking, open.

In the case of the foraging expeditions from Karappa and Maidan Camp, as also during the retirement down the Bara Valley, the troops were operating as a rule in depressions dominated by heights on either side which were a considerable distance apart, and which did not rise abruptly from the low ground. In terrain of this character the hostile riflemen were able to ensconce themselves behind rocks and other cover in situations from which they could fire down on the troops, but which were so distant from where the force was that there seldom was time for detachments to be sent to dislodge the marksmen from their points of vantage. During the march

down the Bara Valley it was occasionally found expedient to send out flanking pickets to a considerable distance from the route which the column was following; but even in spite of this precaution, combatants and followers and animals were hit by bullets fired from the flanks. It will be remembered that the difficulties of that march were not a little aggravated by the panic which seized upon the transport drivers and the hospital bearers; and for this panic the long-range firing of the tribesmen was largely responsible, although it did not actually cause very many casualties.

“Sniping” at night.—Considerable loss and inconvenience, moreover, resulted from the firing into camp at night; and although the plan which was adopted after the experience of the first three or four days at Karappa, of sending out pickets from the bivouacs to a distance never before thought of in such operations, put a stop to this practice to some extent, it is by no means certain that the practical cessation of the nuisance on most nights after the Field Force reached Maidan was not due as much to the great cold as to the presence of the outlying pickets. These isolated pickets were found to be quite secure at night provided that they had constructed sangas; but it would not be safe to assume that detachments of this kind would be equally safe during operations against hillmen who are less disinclined to commit themselves to an attack than the Afridis. It also frequently occurred that the withdrawal of these pickets when the force was shifting its camp in the morning was attended by both difficulty and danger, owing to their distance from effective support.

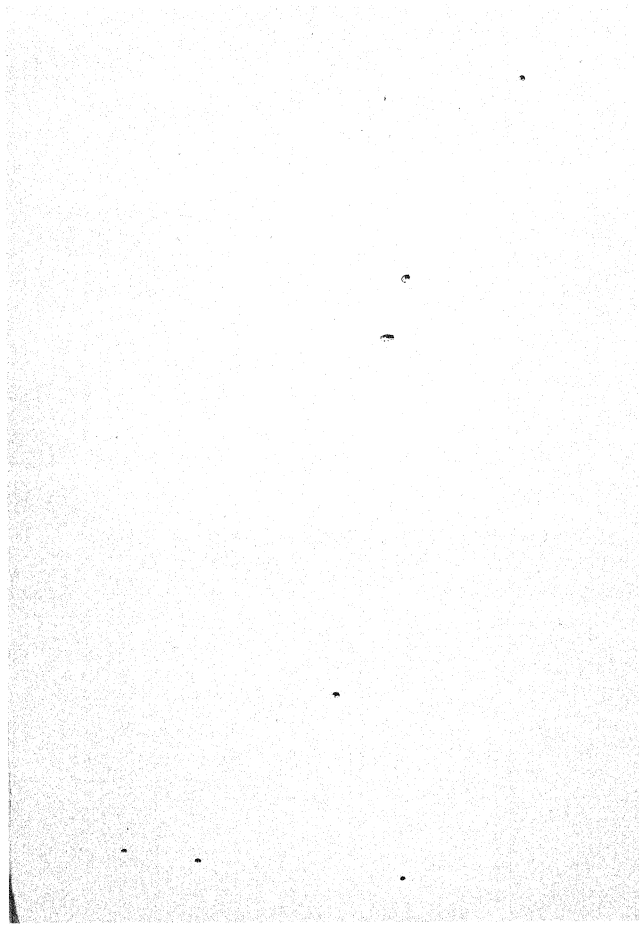
Effect of enemy's improved armament in future small wars.—It seems not unlikely that in the small wars of the future this question of arms of precision in the hands of the enemy will assume even greater prominence than it did

in Tirah. In the case of Pathans, the acquisition of these superior weapons seems to render them averse to those hand-to-hand encounters with swords for which they often showed both inclination and aptitude in the earlier days of Indian border fighting. This may no doubt also prove to be the case with other savage races, but it does not necessarily follow that it will be so. An enemy consisting mainly of masses of fanatical spearmen of the Dervish type, but fortified by a sprinkling of riflemen armed with Mausers or Lee-Metfords, might give a great deal of trouble to a regular army—especially in a scrub-clad region. The compact formations which have hitherto proved so effective when meeting the charge of swarms of savages could not well be maintained in face of the fire of scattered marksmen shooting from well-chosen positions at long range.

Uncertainty as to enemy's intentions that prevails in this kind of warfare.—One other lesson the Tirah campaign appears to inculcate which deserves a passing reference, although it is a lesson taught by the experiences of most wars, and especially of most "small wars." You can seldom make certain what course of action the enemy will pursue under any given set of circumstances, and even the fact that you possess the initiative does not necessarily put you in a position to compel him to do what you want him to do. The Tirah Field Force assembled at Shinawari anticipating little opposition until it reached the Sempagha Pass; and yet the Orakzais with some of their allies unexpectedly crossed the Khanki, seized and fortified the Dargai ridge, and upset all calculations just when the expedition was going to start. A few days later the army was launched at the Sempagha Pass, which the tribesmen had been assiduously fortifying for weeks, and it was assumed that the enemy would offer a stubborn resistance; and yet the opposition turned out to be almost

beneath contempt, considering the strength of the position. Then, after the Sempagha Pass and the Arhanga Pass had been taken, and when the Field Force found itself in the heart of Tirah, it was hoped that the task of the troops was virtually completed and that the enemy would sue for peace; and yet, although the Orakzais fulfilled expectations fairly well in this respect, the struggle with the Afridis had in reality scarcely begun.

It is a point which deserves attention, because in deducing inferences from operations of war and in furnishing comments upon the action of commanders under varying conditions, we are only too apt to forget that the fog of war was enveloping events when they occurred, but that that fog has lifted by the time that the campaign comes to be analytically discussed some time after its conclusion. Steps taken by subordinates and decisions arrived at by commanders which may appear to have been obviously mistaken by the time that the incidents are treated historically, may have represented the only course of action that seemed permissible or even feasible to the responsible authorities on the spot, under the circumstances as they suggested themselves at the moment. The tribesmen of Tirah are admittedly brilliant exponents of partisan warfare. It is in concealing themselves, in conducting fleet movements through difficult ground, in appearing suddenly in threatening force at points where they are least expected, and in dispersing without necessarily losing tactical cohesion when they find themselves worsted, that the masters of this art single themselves out and display their warlike qualities. Such methods are bewildering to the commanders of disciplined troops opposed to them, and unless full allowance is made for this in contests of this class, faulty deductions are likely enough to be drawn from their history.



APPENDIX I

SUBDIVISIONS OF THE AFRIDIS AND THE ORAKZAIS

THE AFRIDIS

THE Afridis are divided up into eight main clans. The Zakka Khel, Malikdin Khel, Khambar Khel, Khamrai Khel, Kuki Khel and Sipan Khel are known as the Khyber Afridis, because they migrate in the winter to the country about the Khyber and immediately to the south and south-east of that defile. There are also the Aka Khel and Adam Khel.

The *Zakka Khel*. This is the most important and powerful clan of the tribe. It was estimated at the time of the Tirah campaign to muster between 5000 and 6000 fighting men. The homes of the Zakka Khel are in Maidan, and to the east of it towards the Waran Valley, also in the Bara Valley. They are accounted the most warlike and treacherous clan along the whole of the North-West Frontier, and are particularly well armed.

The *Malikdin Khel*. This is not a very important clan. It has its home in the west of Maidan and about Bagh.

The *Khambar Khel*. This clan has its home partly in the hills to the south-west of Maidan and partly in the upper Bara Valley. In the winter, portions of it migrate into British territory on the borders of the Peshawar Valley.

The *Khamrai Khel*. A small clan.

The *Kuki Khel*. These inhabit the valley of the Rajgal River in the summer.

The *Sipan Khel*. This clan has its home in the upper part of the Bara Valley.

The *Aka Khel*. These have their summer homes partly in the Waran Valley and partly in the Bara Valley. In the winter they go down into the low country about the opening out of the Bara Valley.

The *Adam Khel*. Numerically, this subdivision of the Afridis is as important as the *Zakka Khels*, and it can muster over 5000 fighting men. It inhabits the country about the Kohat Pass, and its territory is practically cut off from the rest of the Afridi country by the Orakzais. The Adam Khels did not join in the hostilities in 1897 and kept the Kohat Pass open; they police this, and receive a subsidy from the Indian Government for doing so.

THE ORAKZAIS

The Orakzais are broken up into about a dozen clans, of which the most important are the *Bizoti*, the *Daulatzai*, the *Rubia Khel*, the *Mamuzai* and the *Massuzai*.

The *Bizoti*. This clan lives immediately north-west of Kohat; numerous minor expeditions have taken place into its country.

The *Daulatzai*. This subdivision is to be found to the north of the *Bizoti*, about the great bend of the Mastura and to the east of it.

The *Sturi*. This clan has its home in the lower Bara Valley. (It was in their country that General Westmacott's rear-guard beat off the Afridis on the evening of the 13th December.)

The *Rabbia Khel*. This important clan lives in the Khanki Valley about Karappa and lower down. The Samana posts are in their country.

The *Mishti*. A clan living mostly on the southern side of the Sempagha Pass and in the Khanki Valley.

The <i>Sheikan</i> .	}	These three clans are found in the Upper Mastura Valley.
The <i>Abkhel</i> .		
The <i>Mulla Khel</i> .		

The *Mamuzai*. A large clan occupying the upper Khanki Valley.

The *Massozai*. This subdivision is found in the upper basin of the Karmana River in the extreme west of Tirah. Their territory borders on that of the Chamkanis.

APPENDIX II

COMPOSITION OF THE TIRAH FIELD FORCE

Lieutenant-General Commanding : General Sir W. S. A. Lockhart.

Chief of the Staff : Brigadier-General W. G. Nicholson.

THE MAIN COLUMN

First Division

Commanding : Brigadier-General W. P. Symonds.

1st Brigade. Commanding : Brigadier-General R. C. Hart, V.C.

2nd Battalion Derbyshire Regiment.

1st Battalion Devonshire Regiment.

2nd Battalion 1st Ghurkas.

30th Panjab Infantry.

No. 6 British Field Hospital.

No. 34 Native Field Hospital.

2nd Brigade. Commanding : Brigadier-General A. Gaselee.

2nd Battalion Yorkshire Regiment.

1st Battalion Royal West Surrey Regiment.

2nd Battalion 4th Ghurkas.

3rd Sikhs.

Sections A and B, No. 8 British Field Hospital.

Section A and C, No. 14 British Field Hospital.

No. 31 Native Field Hospital.

Divisional Troops.

No. 1 Mountain Battery (British).
No. 2 (Derajat) Mountain Battery.
No. 1 (Kohat) Mountain Battery.
Two Squadrons 18th Bengal Lancers.¹
Ghurka Scouts.²
28th Bombay Pioneers.
No. 3 Company Bombay Sappers and Miners.
No. 4 Company Bombay Sappers and Miners.
Kapurthala Regiment, Imperial Service Infantry.
Maler Kotla Sappers, Imperial Service.
Section A, No. 13 British Field Hospital.
No. 63 Native Field Hospital.

Second Division

Commanding : Major-General A. G. Yeatman-Biggs.

3rd Brigade. Commanding : Brigadier-General F. J. Kempster.

1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders.
1st Battalion Dorset Regiment.
1st Battalion 2nd Ghurkas.
15th Sikhs.³
No. 24 British Field Hospital.
No. 44 Native Field Hospital.

¹ Only one squadron advanced beyond Gandaki.

² The Ghurka Scouts consisted of 3 officers and 120 men selected from the 3rd and 5th Ghurka Regiments. All were specially picked for their activity and fleetness of foot, and they had been trained to work on the steepest hillsides. They were all good marksmen, and had been taught self-reliance. At night they often went out barefooted and in disguise, carrying their arms. Although called "Scouts," they were in reality much more than scouts, and could surpass the tribesmen in their own tactics.

³ Replaced by the 2nd Panjab Infantry late in November.

4th Brigade. Commanding: Brigadier-General R. Westmacott.

2nd Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers.

1st Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment.

1st Battalion 3rd Ghurkas.

36th Sikhs.

Sections C and D, No. 9 British Field Hospital.

Sections A and B, No. 23 British Field Hospital.

No. 34 Native Field Hospital.

Divisional Troops.

No. 8 Mountain Battery (British).

No. 9 Mountain Battery (British).

No. 5 (Bombay) Mountain Battery.

Machine Gun Detachment 16th Lancers.

Two Squadrons 18th Bengal Lancers.¹

21st Madras Pioneers.

No. 4 Company Madras Sappers and Miners.

Jhind Regiment, Imperial Service Troops.

Simur Imperial Service Sappers.

Section B, No. 13 British Field Hospital.

No. 43 Native Field Hospital.

Line of Communication Troops

General Officer Commanding: Lieutenant-General
Sir A. P. Palmer.

22nd Panjab Infantry.

2nd Battalion 2nd Ghurkas.

39th Garhwal Rifles.

2nd Panjab Infantry.

3rd Bengal Cavalry.

No. 42 Native Field Hospital.

¹ Only one squadron advanced beyond Gandaki.

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Gwalior Imperial Service Transport Corps.
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Engineer Field Park.
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One British General Hospital.
One Native General Hospital.
One Veterinary Field Hospital.

Peshawar Columns

Commanding : Brigadier-General A. G. Hammond, V.C.

2nd Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.
2nd Battalion Oxfordshire Light Infantry.
9th Ghurkas.
45th Sikhs.
57th Field Battery.
No. 3 Mountain Battery (British).
9th Bengal Lancers.
No. 5 Company Bengal Sappers and Miners.
No. 5 British Field Hospital.
No. 45 Native Field Hospital.
Two General Hospitals.

Kuram Valley Movable Column

Commanding : Colonel W. Hill.

12th Bengal Infantry.
Nabha Regiment, Imperial Service Infantry.
3rd Field Battery (four guns).
6th Bengal Cavalry.
One Regiment Central India Horse.
Section D, No. 3 British Field Hospital.
No. 62 Native Field Hospital.
One General Hospital.

Reserve Brigade

Commanding: Brigadier-General C. R. Macgreggor.

2nd Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

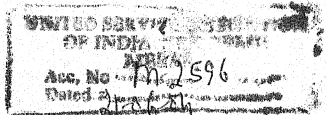
1st Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry.

27th Bombay Infantry.

2nd Regiment Hyderabad Infantry.

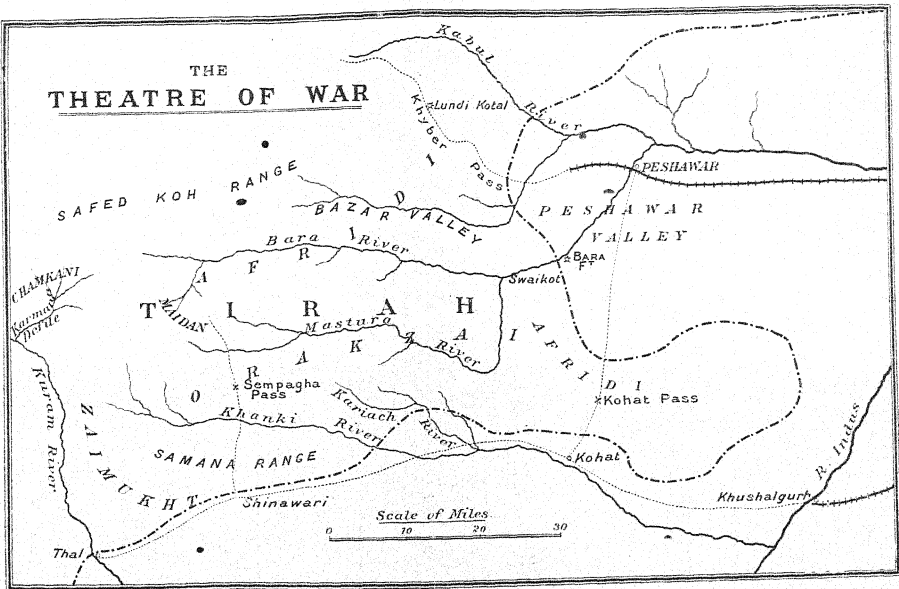
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